PS3™ PlayStation 3 | PSP® PlayStation Portable | PlayStation®2

PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Issue 039 December 2010

SECRETS FROM EVERY **GOD OF WAR** REVEALED

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 39 (December 2010)

God of War
Ghost of Sparta

HUGE REVIEWS
- Medal of Honor
- Castlevania
- Dead Rising 2
- Vanquish
- Rock Band 3
- Enslaved

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY
Bigger and badder than ever!

17 WAYS TO DIE
The best and worst deaths on PS3

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

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PlayStation®Move

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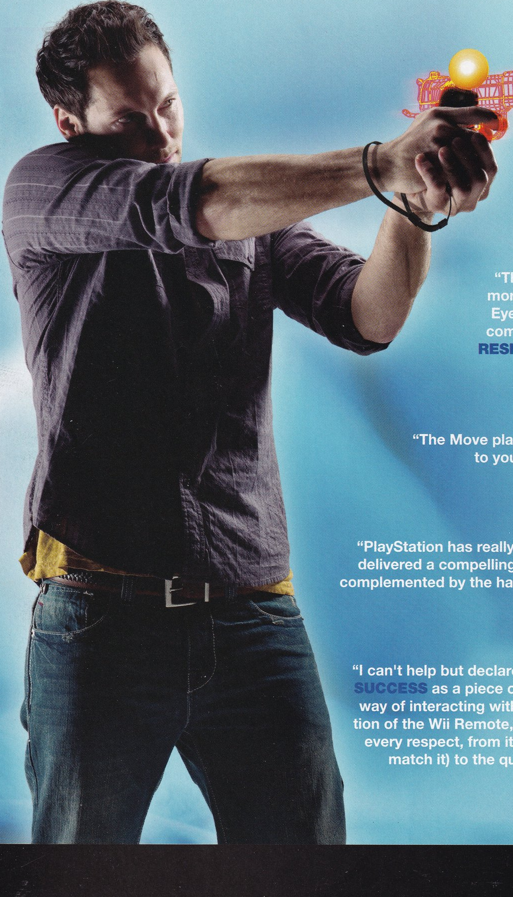
"SONY HAS BROUGHT THEIR "A" GAME WITH THEIR NEW MOTION CONTROLLER" ~ IGN



"The **MOTION CONTROLLER** wars start now...It certainly goes beyond anything we've seen with the Wii Remote."

~ Kotaku

"The more we played with Move the more it impressed us. The PlayStation Eye and motion controller are a killer combination for accurate and **HIGHLY RESPONSIVE** motion-based gameplay."

~ Game Informer

"The Move platform will bring a **NEW DIMENSION** to your PS3 gaming experience."

~ PCmag.com

"PlayStation has really learned from its competitors and delivered a compelling and **ENTERTAINING** experience complemented by the hardware's ability to push HD visuals."

~ Engadget

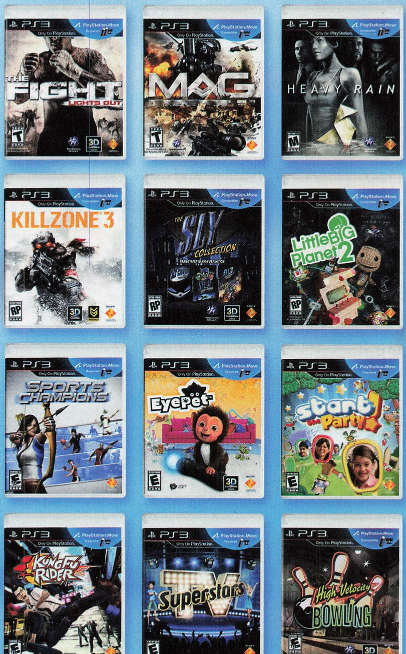
"I can't help but declare PlayStation Move a **RESOUNDING SUCCESS** as a piece of consumer technology and general way of interacting with games. Yes, it's the natural evolution of the Wii Remote, but it trumps Nintendo's creation in every respect, from its accuracy (even MotionPlus can't match it) to the quality of its vibration feedback."

~ Joystiq

PS3 PlayStation®3 PlayStation®Network

PlayStation®Move

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE


THE FIGHT LIGHTS OUT
MAG
HEAVY RAIN
KILLZONE 3
THE SLY COLLECTION
LittleBIG Planet 2
SPORTS CHAMPIONS
EyePet
Start the Party!
Kung Fu Rider
TV Superstars
High Velocity BOWLING

Over 20 sports, action, shooter, social, and family games will be available this fall. For select games you already own, download free software updates from thePlayStation®Store to get the PlayStation®Move experience.

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING TO MATURE
RP-M
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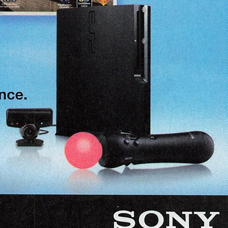

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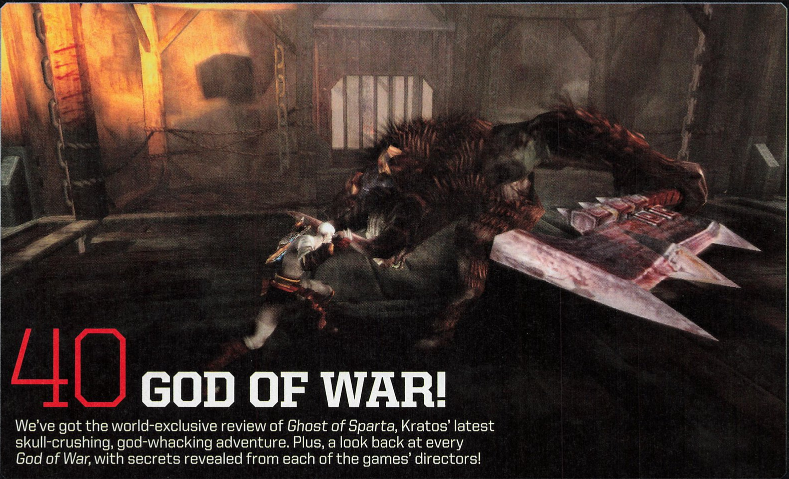
DECEMBER 2010

COVER FEATURE



40 GOD OF WAR!

We've got the world-exclusive review of *Ghost of Sparta*, Kratos' latest skull-crushing, god-whacking adventure. Plus, a look back at every *God of War*, with secrets revealed from each of the games' directors!

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The *Castlevania* series gets a makeover. Will new protagonist Gabriel Belmont and his Combat Cross be able to hold off the forces of evil? The answer lies within, possibly on page 72.

74 DEAD RISING 2

The dead have taken over Fortune City. It's up to motorcyle hero Chuck Greene to clean up the town, one corpse at a time.

Dirty Little Secret

The PSP is even bigger than you might think

As far as I was concerned, it was a no-brainer. A chance to put Kratos on the cover? To have the world-exclusive review of his latest game? And to interview all five game directors from every *God of War*? Yes, please!

And yet there were questions. A PSP game? Really? Isn't the PSP a bit of a dud?

Not at all. Sure, the Nintendo DS has far outsold the PlayStation Portable, but in my estimation the PSP is still tops. When it comes to pure gaming bliss, Sony's handheld has more than a few of my all-time faves, including this month's cover star and its predecessor, along with *MGS: Peace Walker*, *Patapon*, and a stellar lineup of RPGs like *Crisis Core* and *Jeanne d'Arc*.

Granted, I'm a bit of a closet handheld fanatic. For me, there's no better way to tune out the world than putting on my headphones and staring into my own personal screen, fully immersing myself in a way that's sometimes tough to do on a big screen. Plus, unlike Roger—who, I understand, has an HDTV in every room in his house—I've got just one high-def set in my living room, and I can't kick my dear wife off of the couch *every* night just so I can play my PS3.

Apparently, I'm not alone. Sony tells me they've sold 13 million PS3s in the United States. But check this out: The PSP outpaces the PS3 by a whopping 4 million units, with 17 million PSPs in the States alone. Meanwhile, *Chains of Olympus* has sold 2 million copies worldwide, double what *God of War III* has netted. Yes, the PSP game had a big head start over the PS3 outing, but that's still significant.

So dust off that PSP...or more likely, dust off your *perception* of the PSP. There are more of us out there enjoying Sony's handheld than any of us might have believed—and as this month's cover story proves, there are some incredible new games as well. Enjoy!

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
@TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief

Some men lead by example. Some men lead by their charisma or force of will. Gary Steinman leads with all of the above, plus the threat of random yeti attacks. No one wants the yeti, trust us. Not even the yeti.

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor

His eight-hour sock puppet recreation of the classic film *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* proved only one thing: That it will never be Arbor Day in the dimly lit, vaguely taffy-smelling sitting room of Greg Orlando's heart.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director

Known in wrestling circles as "The Yugoslavian Bulldozer," art director Ken Bousquet doesn't even wrestle. He's too busy making this magazine look beautiful, which he does effortlessly. Silly wrestlers.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor

Launching an all-out counter-offensive on grammatical butcheries, supereditor Roger Burchill laid waste to the comma splice. Which is tragic because the comma splice was two days away from retirement.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor

Scott Butterworth will not, under threat of imprisonment, stop rocking. Go ahead and ask him to cease and desist with his rocking and he'll be all, *Not now, as I am currently rocking.* See?

AKA Anne Lewis
Intern

Because "Anne Lewis" may well be an alias, the PTOM staff just refers to its new intern as "the woman who may or may not be Anne Lewis but certainly hearts videogames and unicorns."

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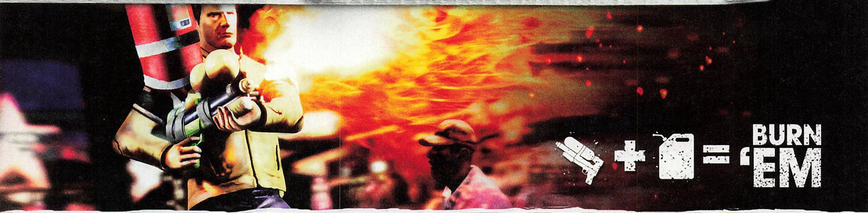
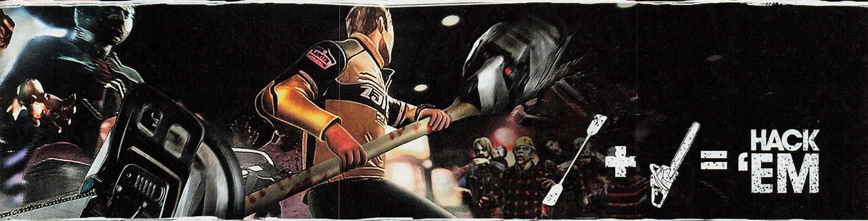
TAPE IT TOGETHER. TEAR THEM APART.





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- Blood and Gore
- Intense Violence
- Language
- Sexual Themes
- Use of Alcohol

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Inside Qore Episode 30

We're heading back to Rome with Ezio!

From the distant past to the near-ish future, Episode 30 takes you on a journey to Awesome. Ezio Auditore returns in *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*—and this time, he's brought friends. With a new film and game in the works, *TRON* is light-cycling its way onto PS3. And the new PSP *God of War* adventure puts Kratos' combat right into the palms of your hands. Plus, check out our list of all-time favorite videogame villains. **VERONICA BELMONT** HOST OF QORE

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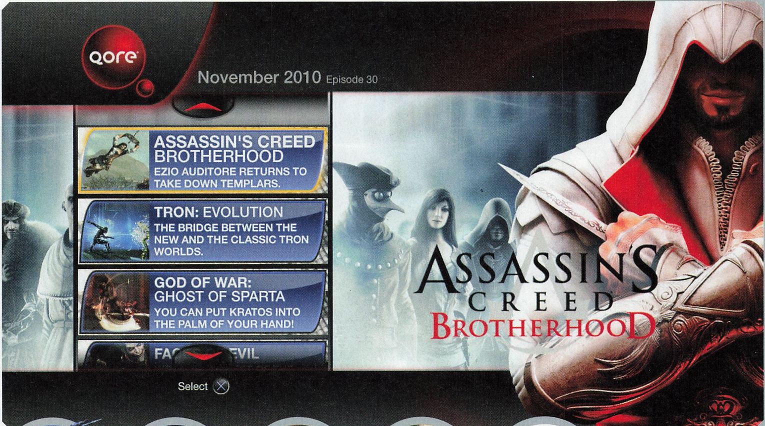

November 2010 Episode 30

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD
EZIO AUDITORE RETURNS TO TAKE DOWN TEMPLARS.

TRON: EVOLUTION
THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE NEW AND THE CLASSIC TRON WORLDS.

GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
YOU CAN PUT KRATOS INTO THE PALM OF YOUR HAND!

FA EVIL

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood
Ezio is getting the band back together in Rome to fight the Templars.

TRON: Evolution
The world of *TRON* is back with a new movie sequel and game! Want to take a ride on the back of our light cycle?

God of War: Ghost of Sparta
For a series known for its massive scale, *Ghost of Sparta* successfully crams Kratos onto PSP.

Faces of Evil
We select our favorite bad guys from some of the best games on PS3. Do you love to hate them as much as we do?

Upcoming Blu-ray and Games releases
Audrey has the hottest Blu-rays this month!

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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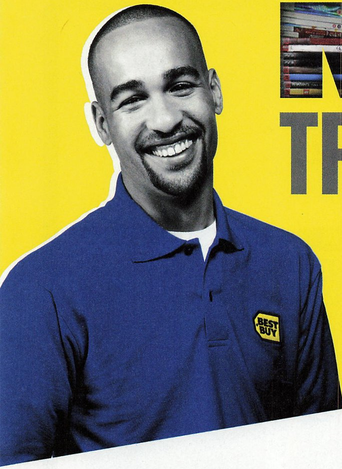

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

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MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY

PS3
GRAN TURISMO 5

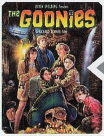
NOV. 02

Car PrOn
Superheroes move over: we're all about *Gran Turismo 5's* supercars today.
--
Also in stores: *DC Universe Online, James Bond 007: Blood Stone*

LARD LAD DONUTS

05

Donut Appreciation Day
Mmm, donuts.



07

National Goonies Day
It's what Chunk would want: Buy *The Goonies: 25th Anniversary Ultimate Collector's Edition.*

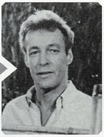
PS3
CALL OF DUTY
BLACK OPS

09

Is Treyarch the new Infinity Ward? And is Vietnam the new hotness in modern warfaring? Find out with today's release of *Call of Duty: Black Ops.*

10

Tinker On!
Russell Johnson aka Roy Hinkley aka the professor from *Gilligan's Island* was born today in 1924. Now where's our coconut PS3, brainiac?



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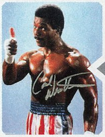
Peace, Out
The 1921 Washington Conference for limitation of armaments does not limit armaments, real or imagined.



16

Creed in Three!
It is, in fact, an assassination nation when *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* hits stores.
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Also in stores: *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*

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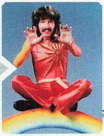
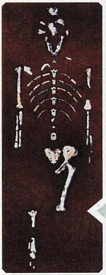
Magic Show
Harry Potter hits movie theaters again, this time for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I.*



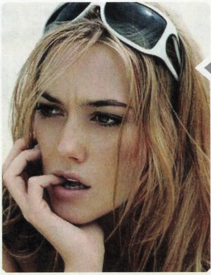


23

Monster Mash!
Make merry with monster Majin in *Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom.* It's out today.

25

Thanks for Giving!
We heartily endorse any holiday devoted solely to stuffing our faces.



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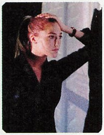
Steamy Rain
Who needs an excuse to run a picture of model Jacqui Ainsley (Madison from *Heavy Rain*)? Not us. (It's her birthday!)

30

Lucy Uncovered
Eggheads discover the fossil remains of Lucy, the most famous Australopithecus ever, on this day in 1970.



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PSP

PlayStation Portable

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TEEN T
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Suggestive Themes

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Team Ninja
Stealthy and back in the fight post-Tomonobu Itagaki

▸▸Page 12

Hail to the King
Regicide? Amazingly, Duke Nukem may well live forever.

▸▸Page 13

It's an OddWorld After All
The Oddworld universe makes a triumphant return to PS3

▸▸Page 17

Marvelous Marv
DC Comics scribe Marv Wolfman discusses DC Universe Online

▸▸Page 21

The Great Debate
Our editor in chief and the new intern tackle an issue of character

▸▸Page 24

◂ ProTip: Only dullards collect bottlecaps. True collectors collect *Ico and Shadow of the Colossus: The Collection.*

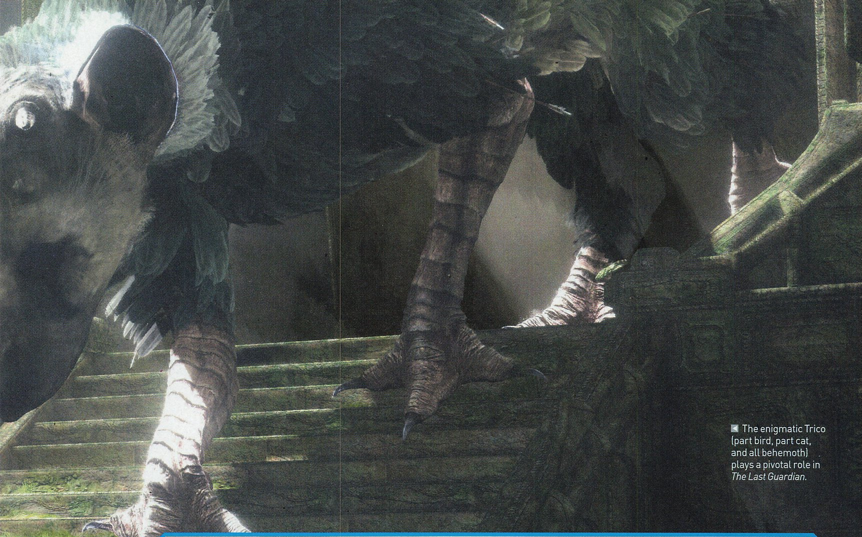
1 Dreams Come True

New details on The Last Guardian and HD Team ICO Collection

When Sony and Team ICO delivered *Shadow of the Colossus* in 2005, this spiritual successor to the development team's namesake title broke new ground by focusing solely on massive allegorical boss battles. *Shadow of the Colossus* itself became a pivotal allegorical element in Adam Sandler's post-9/11 drama *Reign Over Me.* More importantly, the game solidified Team ICO's status as one of the consummate and most influential developers of the last 10 years.

When *God of War* and *God of War II* were adapted for 2009's *God of War Collection,* the compilation went on to be a top-seller on PS3 before it was unseated by *God of War III* later that year. Team ICO lead Fumito Ueda publicly acknowledged his interest in seeing HD adaptations of both *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus.* With spring 2011's *Ico and Shadow of the Colossus: The Collection,* it now seems both Team ICO and Ueda will finally have the endings they've both been hoping for.

The Collection will ship on a single Blu-ray disc. Both games will be upgraded to high-definition with a 16:9 aspect ratio, enhanced textures, improved framerates, and support for Trophies as well as 3D. Looking back, Ueda views *Colossus* as a complete product, so there will be no new colossi added to the game. However, *Ico* will include the extended ending missing from the original North American release.



The enigmatic Trico (part bird, part cat, and all behemoth) plays a pivotal role in *The Last Guardian.*

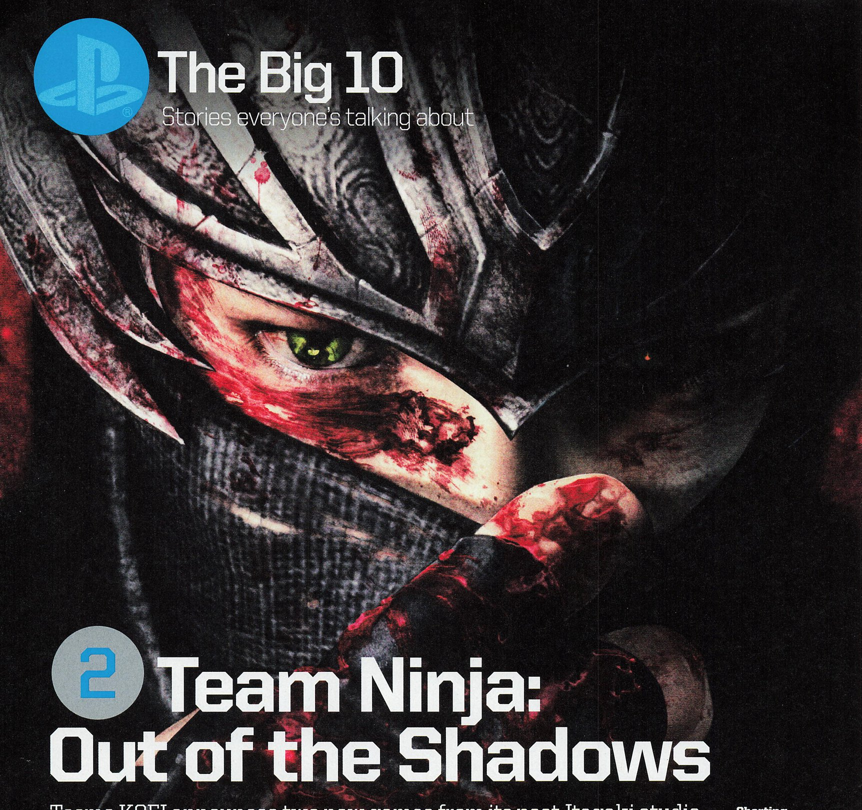
Happy Endings

Gamers who follow Team ICO jumped to the conclusion—based on the game's original trailer—that *The Last Guardian* will have a sad ending. But director Fumito Ueda has said that's not necessarily so—leaving his comment open-ended for gamers to ponder.

Meanwhile, *The Last Guardian* was first unveiled with a mesmerizing trailer at E3 2009, but Sony has shared little else since. While the game is still over a year away from its holiday 2011 release, the visionary duo leading its development, director Ueda and producer Kenji Kaido, have shed some new light on what could become their greatest opus.

Ueda does not yet want to reveal actual gameplay, but through the second trailer released during this year's Tokyo Game Show he wanted to show that the massive "birdcat" Trico has much more character and a greater range of animations to accommodate a wider variety of level designs. The Trico will respond (or may *not* respond) to the young boy the way a real creature would. Progression throughout the game is closely tied to the emotional bond between the two. How that relationship is cultivated is still one of the many closely held secrets surrounding *Guardian.* As for exactly which of the two is the guardian—the boy or the Trico—Team ICO continues to be coy about who is protecting whom.

While 3D support is confirmed for *Ico and Shadow of the Colossus: The Collection,* no announcement has yet been made as to whether *The Last Guardian* will also offer 3D gaming.



2 Team Ninja: Out of the Shadows

Tecmo KOEI announces two new games from its post-Itagaki studio

According to Team Ninja heir Yosuke Hayashi, Ninja has weathered the storm—two, perhaps. First there was the turbulent departure of former head Tomonobu Itagaki, then parent company Tecmo's hasty merger with KOEI. Hayashi, who helmed the development of *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* and its sequel, is now leading the group of young guns at Ninja out of the shadows with two recently announced games.

In the early stages of development, *Ni-Oh* is an action game loosely based on an account of Japan's first Caucasian samurai. *Ni-Oh* was originally announced in 2005 as a PS3 pet project of KOEI co-founder Kou Shibusawa. The team's collaboration with Shibusawa signals a milestone in the ongoing cross-pollination of parent company Tecmo KOEI.

Preliminary work has also commenced on *Ninja Gaiden 3.* In typical fashion Team Ninja is remaining as secretive as ever, but producer Yosuke Hayashi says there are clues hidden within the early concept image of protagonist Ryu Hayabusa. Compared to previous installments, this next release in Team Ninja's flagship series will involve greater character development of the man in black. We may see, for example, how Ryu's existence as a brutal assassin has affected his psyche. We're also told *Ninja Gaiden 3* will be an exploration of character not just of Ryu, but of Team Ninja as well.

Charting New Courses

With *Ni-Oh* already in the works for Kou Shibusawa, Team Ninja hasn't ruled out further projects with other developers—citing its collaboration with Nintendo's Yoshio Sakamoto for *Metroid: Other M* as a period of "give and take" as well as a new avenue for creativity. As for any comparisons to the old guard, Yosuke Hayashi admits the headstrong new team is just getting ready to show the world what it can do.

3 Hail to the King, Baby!

Even a decade of delay can't keep Duke Nukem: Forever down

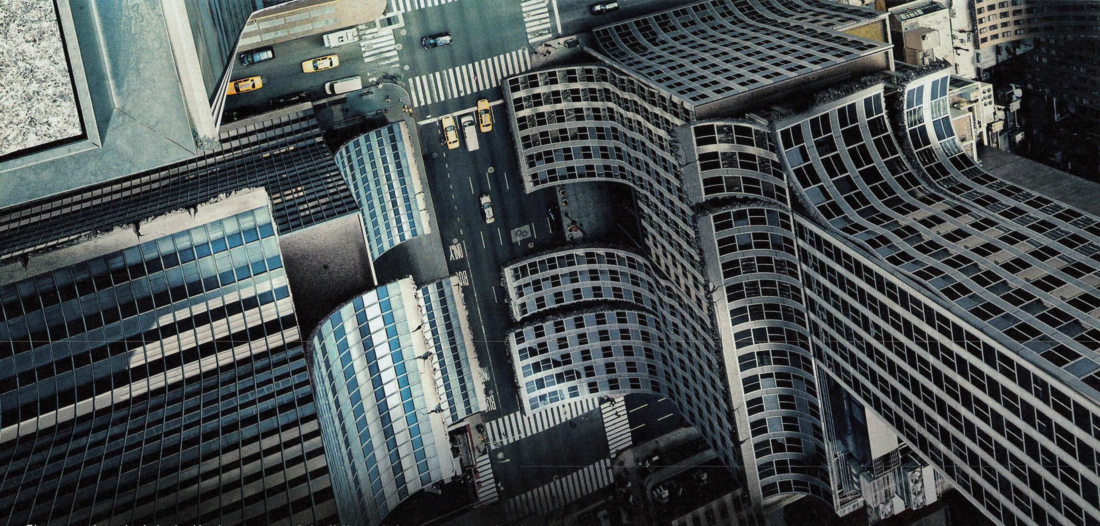
Industry laughingstock no more! PAX 2010 attendees had their collective minds blown with the out-of-nowhere announcement that *Duke Nukem: Forever* lives. PlayStation devotees might not get what all fuss is about but to put it in perspective, *Forever* was announced as a PC game around the time we were playing the brand-new *Crash Bandicoot 2, PaRappa The Rapper,* and *Final Fantasy VII.* Yeah, it's been a long, strange journey...but *Forever* is finally coming out next year.

After over a decade in the epicenter of development hell, the game that brought down 3D Realms has been brought back to life by Gearbox. The ultra-capable *Borderlands* developer not only knows a thing or two about tragic delays (*Aliens: Colonial Marines,* where art thou?), but is also made up of several people who've got more than a little history with gaming's tank-topped embodiment of testosterone. In fact, Gearbox president Randy Pitchford got his start working with Duke.

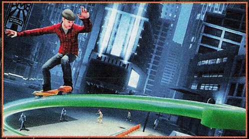
Forever's resurrection was surprising, but the gameplay is exactly what fans expect: a shooter with a ribald sense of humor. The Nukem games have always been about doing things with the genre to make gamers giggle (and parents cringe) and our playable demo was no exception. The action kicked off at a urinal, put Duke behind the wheel of a monster truck, and ended by breaking the fourth wall to innuendo-laden smithereens. That's Duke Nukem all the way, baby!

▼ Will this finally mark the end of *Duke Nukem: Forever* jokes? The answer is maybe (but very probably not).

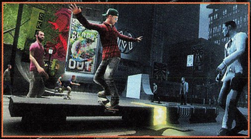
ShaunWhite
SKATEBOARDING
Transform your world.



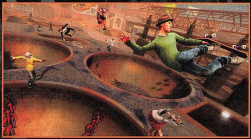
Change streets into half-pipes, morph buildings into ramps, and extend rails for endless grinds, alone or with friends, in the only game that gives you the power to shape, create, and ride the ultimate skatepark.



Extend Handrails.



Morph Terrain.



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E 10+ T

- Alcohol Reference
- Comic Mischief
- Lyrics
- Mild Language
- Mild Suggestive Themes
- Mild Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING **www.esrb.org**

PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network | Wii™ | XBOX 360® XBOX LIVE | UBISOFT

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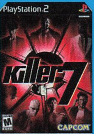
Who can sleep when America is, apparently, damned?

4 To Hell and Back

EA and Grasshopper Manufacture damn us all



Killer 7

Although Grasshoper Manufacture has a significant gameography, most of its releases were for other platforms. A notable exception: the stylish, cell-shaded noir adventure *Killer 7* on PS2.

Electronic Arts is going to Hell, and we're all invited.

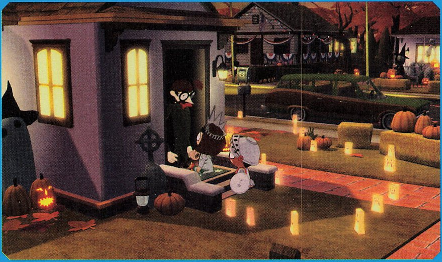
The publisher was already well acquainted with the depths of Hell—thanks to its release of *Dante's Inferno*—but with the recent announcement of *Shadows of the Damned,* Japanese game developer Grasshopper Manufacture will be the ones to give us the grindhouse tour.

The twisted minds at Grasshopper Manufacture are certainly no strangers to wretchedness either. Shinji Mikami *(Resident Evil)* is taking the reigns as creative producer, while Goichi "Suda51" Suda *(No More Heroes)* injects his signature punk-rock style as executive director. Akira Yamaoka *(Silent Hill)* will compose the score for the game that EA describes as a psychological action thriller.

Shadows of the Damned chronicles the exploits of tough-as-nails demon hunter Garcia Hotspur. When vengeance-seeking hellspawn kidnap Garcia's girlfriend, it's up to him to travel to the infernal regions in order to rescue the love of his life. Joining Garcia on his crusade through the underworld is a former demon who possesses the power to transform into an array of vicious weapons.

To bring the army of darkness to its knees, players must harness the power of the light in what EA calls "light versus darkness" gameplay. Suda51 and Mikami are combining this mood with mind-bending puzzles, over-the-top action sequences, and twisted boss battles across demon-ripped towns, shadow-infested forests, and grimy city sewers of the Damned.

This revelation comes two years after EA Partners first announced their collaboration with Grasshopper Manufacture in August 2008. *Shadows of the Damned* is scheduled for a summer 2011 release.



5 The Upside of Downloads

Brütal Legend creator Tim Schafer explains his studio's bite-sized approach

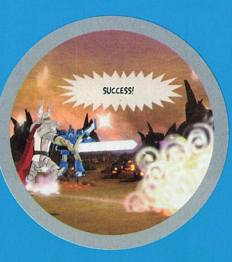
Double Fine Productions is no small-time studio. Under the direction of seasoned developer Tim Schafer—the creative and hilarious mind behind the classic *Monkey Island* adventure games—the relatively young company has already produced two widely acclaimed titles: *Psychonauts* and *Brütal Legend*.

Recently, however, Schafer announced that rather than produce another big-budget full-priced retail release, the studio would instead focus on four separate downloadable games—a market typically supplied by small but scrappy independent developers. Why the change? According to Schafer, the ever-inflating price tag of big box production was starting to cramp Double Fine's distinctive style.

"When games get that expensive, it gets harder and harder to convince the person giving you the money to do what you might call risky or unproven things," Schafer explains. "And that's what Double Fine likes to do: new stuff."

By trading the pressures of big budget expectations for the creative freedom to pursue offbeat.ideas, Schafer suggests Double Fine—and developers in general—will be better equipped to produce meaningful new experiences for gamers. "A lot of the most recent [downloadable] titles have been some of the most fun games to come out this year, and part of it is because you can try different things and do unusual stuff. You're risking less money so you can be more true to the creative impulse, which is much more natural for us."

The studio's first project—the Halloween-themed RPG adventure *Costume Quest*—will be available for download in October, which should answer the question: Is Schafer's plan more treat than trick?



6 Stranger and Stranger

Oddworld makes its return to PlayStation

It seems like years since things got odd on the PlayStation. Come April, things will be getting both odd and strange, as UK developer Just Add Water revives the beloved *Oddworld* series with *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath* for PSN.

Wrath, a first- and third-person shooting adventure, first saw release on the original Xbox in 2005. It was a marked departure from the three previous *Oddworld* adventures made by famed developer Lorne Lanning and his Oddworld Inhabitants game studio *(Abe's Oddysee, Abe's Exoddus,* and *Munch's Oddysee)* in that it offered a new protagonist in the bounty hunter with a secret—Stranger—and emphasized shooting over platforming and puzzle solving.

Just Add Water plans to update the game for its PlayStation release, offering upgraded 720p graphics, PlayStation Move support, reworked dialogue, and other as yet unannounced improvements. Best of all, Just Add Water has announced it plans to make five additional *Oddworld* games in the future. Lanning says the partnership is working so well that it's easy to imagine new games being made for the series.

It's strange but true to be sure. And wonderful.

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PlayStation®Move
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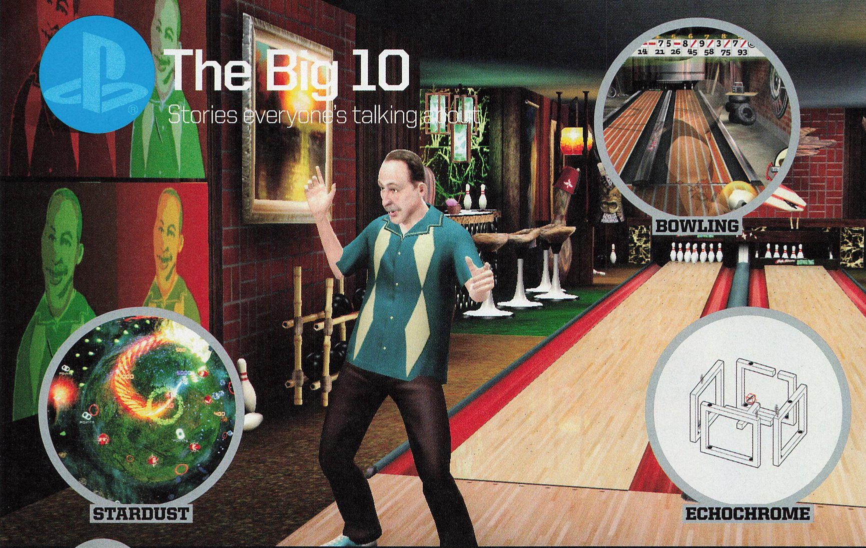
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



7

Spend Money to Save Money?

PlayStation Plus gets put to the test

PlayStation Plus enhances the PlayStation 3 and PSP online experience with exclusive features and offers as well as free and discounted games every month, but the $49.99 annual fee ($17.99 for three months) might scare off casual PSN users. After a few months of service, we look back to see whether Plus is really worth the investment.

What We Love

Games aplenty: Each month typically brings four free games, which are ours as long as we keep up our subscription. Early on, we've seen hits like *WipEout HD* and *Syphon Filter* up for grabs. Beyond the freebies, we also have access to savings on games and add-ons. *Echochrome* and *Super Stardust HD* were recently discounted and the on-sale content is ours to keep even if we ditch Plus.

Early access: Sony's early release of the *God of War: Ghost of Sparta* demo for Plus users has been the biggest debut to date on the premium service. Anticipated PSN titles *Swords & Soldiers* and *PixelJunk Racers: 2nd Lap* both launched early on Plus, as did PlayStation Move support for *High Velocity Bowling.* And Plus is currently the only way to experience Hulu Plus on PlayStation 3.

Already there: Plus also lets us schedule automatic downloads of demos, patches, and more on PS3—meaning no more sitting through pesky firmware updates when we turn on the console.

What We Want

We'd like Sony to unleash some brand-new and exclusive freebies for Plus users, instead of only offering games folks may already own. A discount on all PSN content (instead of select items) would also tempt us to take more chances on downloads. And while hour-long trials on full games are great, we'd like to see it expanded beyond established hits.

Is It Worth It?

Those who have their PS3 running on a daily basis will undoubtedly benefit from Plus and likely save quite a bit of cash in the long run. Less active PS3 and PSP users may not see as much of an advantage to the service—casual gamers might want to wait for a more casual (read: free) offering.

Money Crunch

$4.17
Monthly cost (with yearly plan)

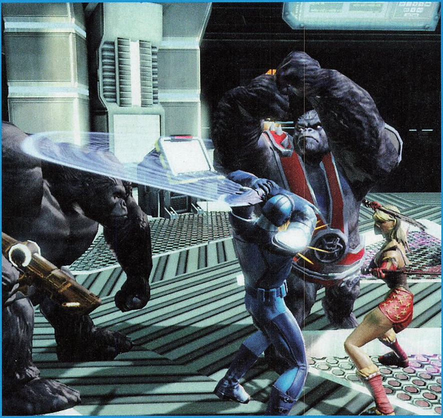
$25.34
Average monthly value of free games

$17.69
Average monthly game discounts

$3.54 or **39%**
Average discount per game

100%
Increase in cool quotient with Plus icon by PSN ID

(Data from June-Sept. 2010)



8 Super, Super, Superwho?

Comic writer Marv Wolfman howls for DC Universe Online

DC Universe Online, Sony Online Entertainment's bold attempt to bring the stable of DC Comics characters to a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, bursts onto the PS3 this November. We spoke to famed comic author Marv Wolfman about his involvement in the game.

What is your role in creating and expanding the world of DCUO?
My job was to create missions and permeations and concepts for the game that are purely DC-driven, so the stories we have that take place with Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, the Teen Titans, or the villains, work with those characters. So a Flash mission is definitely the type of thing he'd get involved with, which is very different from the type of story that Batman would get involved in.

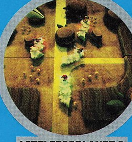
How is bringing the DC universe to an MMO game different from creating a comic book?
In a comic book, we control the storytelling and the pacing. In a videogame, specifically an MMO, the player controls that. So, we offer possibilities that a player can get involved with. I may have one way the Flash or Green Lantern would deal with something, but the player might come up with a completely different approach to solving the same problem.

What types of missions will players take on in DCUO?
There are multiple types, because you can be a superhero, a tech-hero, a magic-hero, and the same types of villains. So the quests are all about those character types. It could be that Gorilla Grodd wants to devolve people into apes who are under his command. So if you're a villain, you're trying to help Grodd accomplish that. If you're a hero, you'll be teaming up with other DC characters to try to stop Gorilla Grodd. The missions are all about how you get involved—whether you have to get parts for them or get involved with combat or stop the heroes.

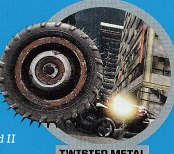
9 The Readers' Most Wanted

Another month, another battle between cars and combat as *CoD: Black Ops* and *Gran Turismo 5* once again vie for the top spot. Our answer is simple: Why not combine both, like the no. 6 pick, *Twisted Metal?* Or, better yet, create a battle between guns and garages using the no. 3 pick, *LittleBigPlanet 2?*

01 *Call of Duty: Black Ops*
02 *Gran Turismo 5*
03 *LittleBigPlanet 2*
04 *Mortal Kombat*
05 *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*
06 *Twisted Metal*
07 *Medal of Honor*
08 *Final Fantasy XIV*
09 *Killzone 3*
10 *Batman: Arkham City*
11 *Rock Band 3*
12 *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*
13 *inFamous 2*
14 *Dead Rising 2*
15 *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock*
16 *Fallout: New Vegas*
17 *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds*
18 *SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs*
19 *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II*
20 *The Sims 3*



LITTLEBIGPLANET 2



TWISTED METAL

Stats appear courtesy of OTX Research. All games are PS3 titles scheduled to release after Sept. 23, 2010. Polling period was Sept. 5 to Sept. 18, 2010.

PlayStation.3 PlayStation.Network

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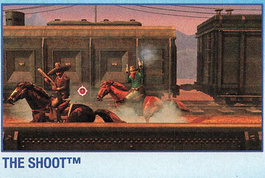

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*Shooting attachment optional. Sold seperately.

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CONTENT RATED BY
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PlayStation®Move

THE FIGHT!

PS3
PlayStation Move
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THE FIGHT
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TEEN
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ESRB
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB
PlayStation Network
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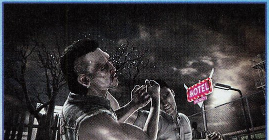
SONY

Dominate the bare-knuckle fighting world with an iron fist and rule the underground.

COMING HOLIDAY 2010



THE FIGHT LIGHTS OUT™

*2 PlayStation®Move motion controllers required

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

10 Should Dante ditch his brand-new look?

Editors may cry as they argue over Dante's monumental makeover

Yes

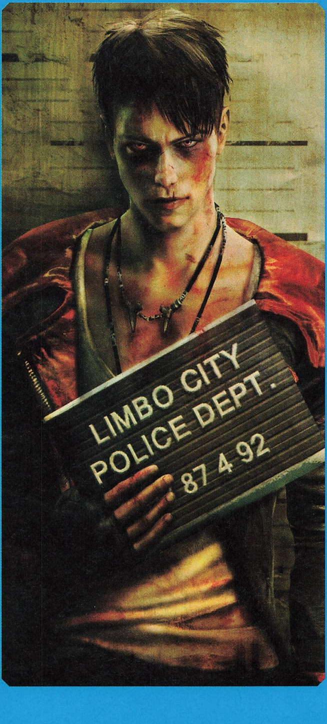
Says the devilishly disturbed Dante (the *real* Dante) fangirl **Anne Lewis**

Where do I even begin? Oh, wait, I know. This is not Dante! The *Devil May Cry* Dante we all know and love is a sarcastic badass with sweet silver locks, not this skinny kid with emo bangs. On top of (or rather, hidden somewhere beneath) the emo hair is a sunken face that makes him look like that one sparkly guy from those crappy vampire movies.

I understand that *DmC* is meant to be a prequel and a little character redesign is fine because Dante is a bit younger here, but this is a completely different Dante.

It's almost as if Capcom were developing a game with a wholly different character and—realizing no one would care about the newcomer—decided to throw the *Devil May Cry* label on it. The only way I can see this redesign remotely working is if something happens toward the end of the game and—*bam!*—Dante gets his white hair. Or better yet, it turns out this really isn't Dante. As for the new face, well, only reconstructive surgery would get him from A to B.

I know it seems juvenile to prejudge a character based on style, but Dante's white hair and rock star looks are iconic. Perhaps it's all our fault though: Capcom bigwig Keiji Inafune said the redesign was specifically done to appeal to a western audience. Apparently they noticed we like pale scrawny dudes and gave us...this.



No

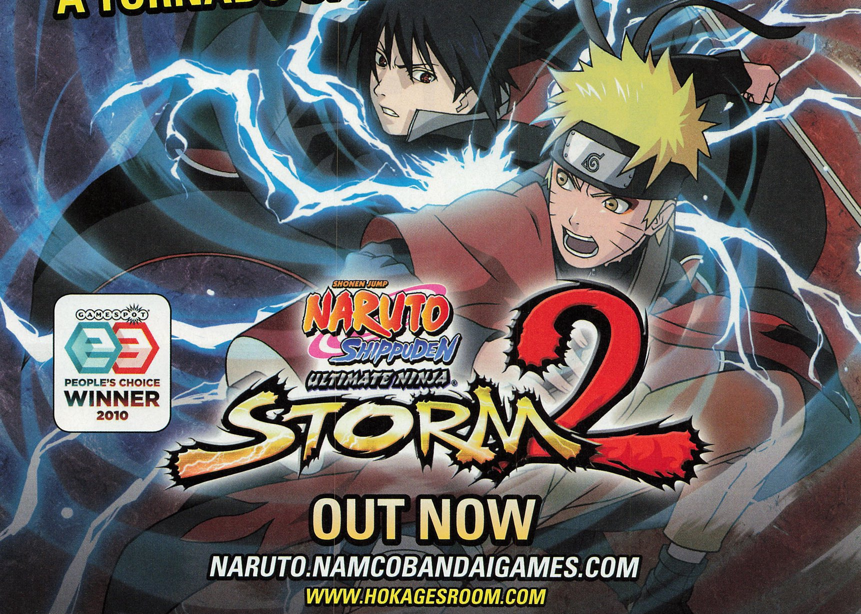
Says the one man open to change in this stagnant universe **Gary Steinman**

Dearest Anne: Waah. So they changed your beloved character. They grew out his bad bleach job and cut his hair. They ditched that godawful trench coat and got rid of his surfeit of belt buckles. They tucked his boots *underneath* his pants so he doesn't look like a cross-dressing go-go dancer who forgot to take this week's dose of hormones. They made him younger. They made him hipper. He's now someone of the *moment*. He no longer looks like a millennial creation cobbled together by designers hopelessly trapped in the late '80s and early '90s. And you don't like it? To that I can only repeat: Waah.

With the possible exception of Capcom's mighty Mega Man, every game must evolve or wither away. Dante was already limping along, overtaken by more contemporary takes on the notion of cool. He hadn't evolved enough in recent outings to warrant another look from this gamer—and although I readily admit the new Dante hasn't yet captured my heart, he certainly has me excited about *DmC* in a way I haven't been since the first *Devil May Cry* game.

Granted, not all change is good, but stagnation is much worse. And in this particular case I see many more upsides to Dante's edgy new look—not the least of which is the fact that it's such a radical departure from his previous utterly passé image.

A TORNADO OF FIERCE NINJA ACTION!



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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Cartoon Violence
Mild Blood
Mild Language
Mild Suggestive Themes

VIZ media · CyberConnect2 · SHONEN JUMP · BANDAI

XBOX 360 · XBOX LIVE · PS3 PlayStation 3 · PlayStation Network

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PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Previews

Quick Pitch

High Above Saturn

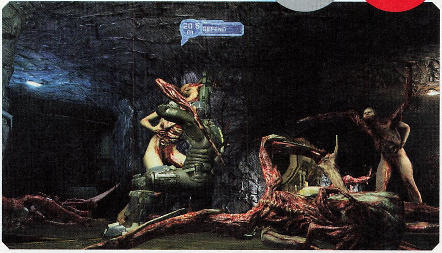
Dead Space 2 is set in the Sprawl, a city-sized space station crawling with zombie-ish aliens.

Below Horror's Depths

The necromorphs are even more disturbing and in multiplayer one team gets to control them.

Beyond Survival

The sequel amplifies the action. Has it strayed too far from its creepy roots?



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **January 2011** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Visceral Games**

Dead Space 2

Humans and necromorphs go behead to head

The first *Dead Space* did one thing exceptionally well: evoke a lonely feeling that can only come from being stranded at the edge of the universe. So when we stepped up to play *Dead Space 2* multiplayer, we were skeptical. What we discovered surprised us: the core gameplay remains just as fun against human opponents—and this is no tacked-on addition.

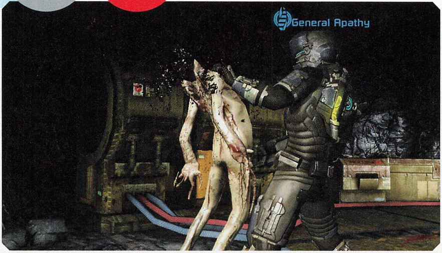
Those who've played *Left 4 Dead* on PC or Xbox 360 will see its influence on *Dead Space 2's* multiplayer: it's objective-based, 4-vs-4 competition where the Isaac Clarke lookalike Sprawl security battle player- and artificial intelligence-controlled necromorphs. The focus is tactical—teamwork rules and straight deathmatching won't win the game. The security team faces a multipart objective. In the Titan mines, we scrambled for parts to assemble a machine and then defended it until it sealed off the necromorph invasion point. Humans carry two weapons: the improved pulse rifle and a secondary one of choice. They also have stasis and med packs—the latter of which affects nearby teammates, encouraging security forces to stick together. Carrying an objective prevents running and paints a "kill" marker on the holder, so an escort is a must.

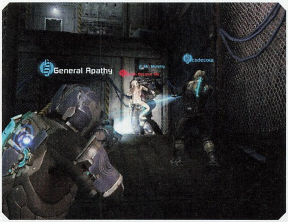
Necromorphs choose their species at each spawn; we played as Lurkers, Spitters, and Pack, but other varieties are forthcoming. Necros choose which vent to spawn from, allowing for surprise as security forces are tough in a frontal assault. With sneaky moves and the ability to see through walls, the necros have the ambush advantage.

The Spice of Death

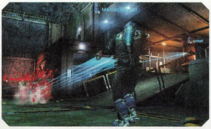
Playing as security is familiar to *Dead Space* vets, but having to watch teammates' backs, work under a clock, and facing necromorphs that don't simply charge mindlessly makes the standard play feel all new. Sticking in a group, watching ceilings for

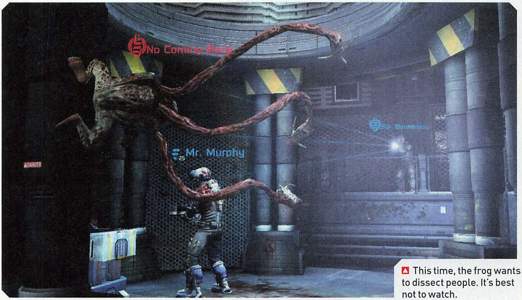
▸▸





With the human forces, combat remains similar to that in the original *Dead Space*. Alien forces are best dismembered limb from limb before being dispatched.





This time, the frog wants to dissect people. It's best not to watch.

Lurkers, and removing the childlike Pack from buddies' faces becomes addictively intense.

Playing as necros, we had the most success as the Lurker. Crawling babies with three tentacles that extend from their backs, the Lurkers specialize in sniping from unexpected angles since they can traverse walls and ceilings. Holding L1 extends its tentacles and reveals three red dots, like a laser sighting on a gun. Firing from a horizontal angle is like wielding a shotgun, but firing from a wall allows the vertical line of shots to all hit one target for maximum damage.

The Spitter looks like a slasher, but can charge up its sputum by holding R1 and hocking a power-loogie at a single target. The Pack are terrifying children with knives for fingers and specialize in melee combat. All three necros can attempt a paired attack by hitting X to sprint forward (Spitters) or leap a great distance (Pack and Lurkers) and then latching onto their victim with a timed melee attack. Once joined, both players must attempt to mash X faster than the other to win the struggle. When security wins, the reward is a brutal instant-kill animation, but necros can only kill a wounded foe so they must be more clever and consider more carefully before pouncing.

> "Playing as necros, we had the most success as the Lurker."

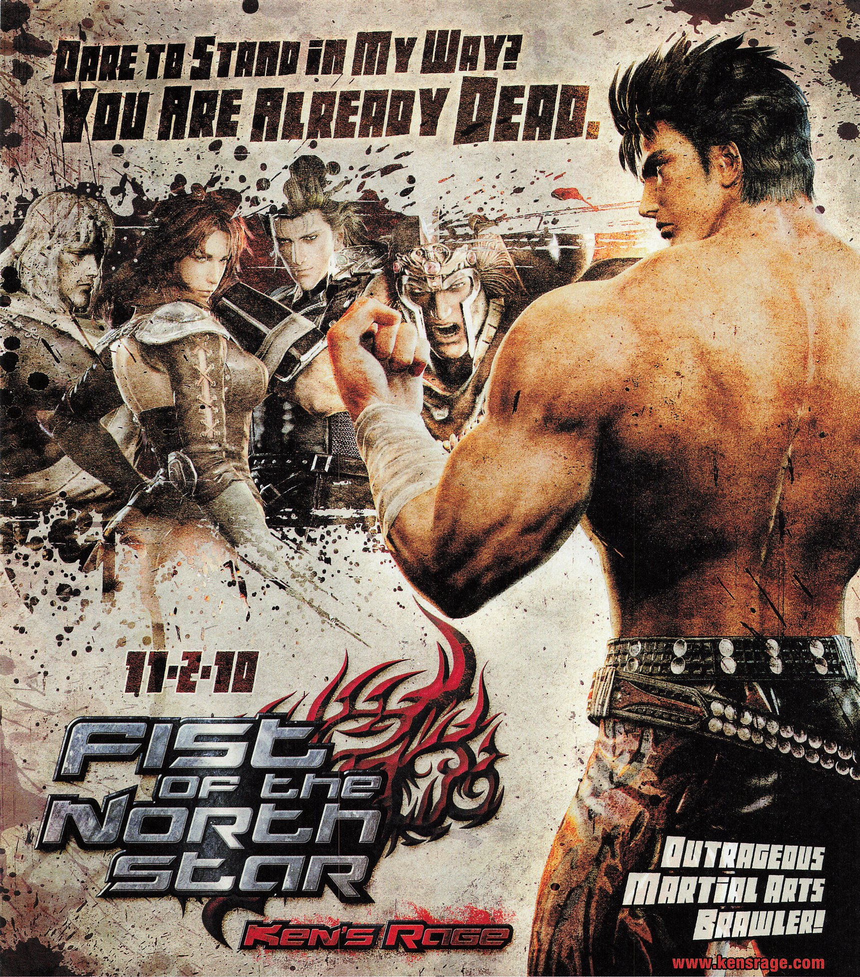
Mission Accomplished

Dead Space's combat, favoring limb shots and slower movement, translates surprisingly well to multiplayer, and the second map revealed *Space 2's* multiplayer isn't a one-trick pony. This time, the security team was trapped on a small ship, needing to flee via an escape pod. Now it wasn't about roving and collecting; it was about activating a sequence of locks to open doors. This level proved exceedingly frantic, as the security forces' progress was stop-and-start, an almost grinding process.

Our time with the multiplayer was undoubtedly fun, but—with its nonstop action—it wasn't particularly scary. Is it a sign that the developers are focusing too much on thrills rather than chills? From our experience with the single-player, we're betting probably not. The balance has shifted for sure, but so far the single-player portion of the game seems to involve plenty of quieter moments, while the multiplayer has shown *Space 2* has some exciting territory to explore in the action half of its newfound split personality. **MATTHEW KEAST**

Deja Vu

Think the multiplayer screens look familar? That's because they are: "We wanted a multiplayer experience integrated into the single-player world, so every multiplayer map takes place in a logical environment within the Sprawl," says Niall Hayes, senior director of development. But Hayes won't tell us if it happens at the same time that Isaac's in the Sprawl. "That's part of the mystery."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HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood

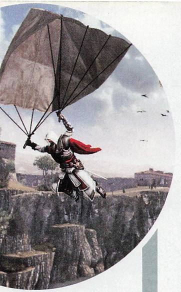
All-new single-player details fuel brotherly love

Don't be fooled by *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood's* short development cycle: This isn't some rushed cash-in meant to ensure the developers pay their mortgages. Sure, it's got the free-running, expansive vistas, Italian setting, and bits where killers introduce Mr. Windpipe to Sir Cold Steel, but there are some new elements too.

Uncle Mario's dead, the golden apple's been stolen, and Rome's under the control of the Borgia family. Ezio, who's worked his way up to master assassin, is going into the demolition business. He's bringing down Borgia towers in Rome, home of the Colosseum and the Vatican.

Ezio has to burn the towers; once he finds one, he needs to break into it, kill the guards, climb to the top, and set it alight. Thankfully, he won't have to go it alone. This new more mature Ezio can now recruit assassins. He can have up to 12 under his control at any one time, acquiring candidates by helping them out in combat.

The new employees can kill guards, or perform missions to win resources. The trick is to manage them properly, making sure they're sent on missions they can complete. Each task will have a percentage score assigned, so it's possible to judge the likelihood of success. Think of it as assassin-style human resources. **RACHEL PENNY**



Ezio will be able to access some nice new toys such as a mini hang glider (above) and a crossbow.

The price for this saucy courtesan is wrong. Dead wrong, to be more specific.

The assassin's creed: It's better to give than to receive.

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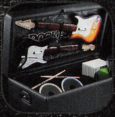

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HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Criterion Games**

Need For Speed Hot Pursuit

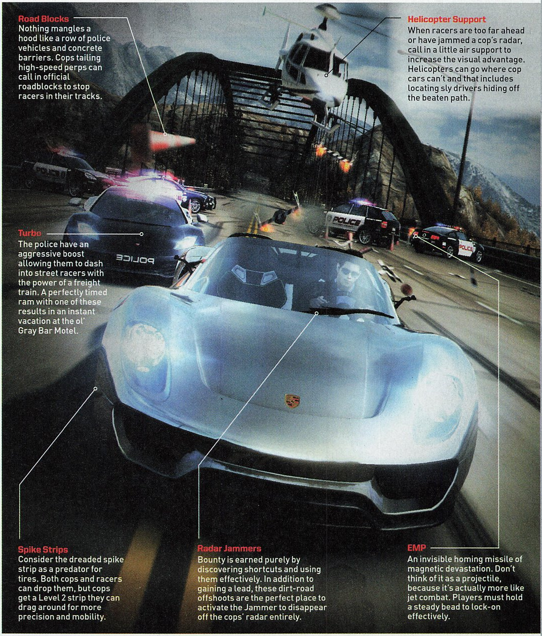
Better to Burnout than fade away

When Criterion announced its next project would be *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* and not a proper sequel to its beloved *Burnout* series, we had our reservations. For one, 2009's *Need for Speed: Shift* was one of the best racing games in the series' history. Second, *where's the next Burnout?* Well, after a lengthy hands-on with the upcoming game, not only is there zero cause for concern but we may give the mantle of "Best *Need for Speed* Game Ever" to *Pursuit*.

Pursuit is the *Burnout* sequel we've been waiting for. Criterion staples—such as takedowns, time-shaving shortcuts, and drifting into oncoming traffic to charge boost—have all wiggled their way back into this return to *Speed's* roots, making for a package that's as beautiful as the exotic licensed cars we eventually ripped to shreds. And as if that weren't enough, everything is getting a supercharged upgrade with the game's addictive cops-vs.-crooks formula.

This ain't *Mario Kart*, so don't expect to find powerups strewn across the track. Instead different modes will offer unique loadouts. Supplies are limited with certain weapons shared between classes, and the way each challenge divvies them up makes for a staggering amount of play options.

Playing a *Pursuit* map that's fully stacked with racers and fuzz is already blissfully chaotic. And the fact that the action is mirrored online—incorporating friend-specific challenges—pretty much guarantees that we'll be pre-ordering. **CHRIS ANTISTA**



Road Blocks
Nothing mangles a hood like a row of police vehicles and concrete barriers. Cops tailing high-speed perps can call in official roadblocks to stop racers in their tracks.

Helicopter Support
When racers are too far ahead or have jammed a cop's radar, call in a little air support to increase the visual advantage. Helicopters can go where cop cars can't and that includes locating sly drivers hiding off the beaten path.

Turbo
The police have an aggressive boost allowing them to dash into street racers with the power of a freight train. A perfectly timed ram with one of these results in an instant vacation at the ol' Gray Bar Motel.

Spike Strips
Consider the dreaded spike strip as a predator for tires. Both cops and racers can drop them, but cops get a Level 2 strip they can drag around for more precision and mobility.

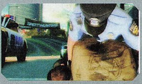
Radar Jammers
Bounty is earned purely by discovering shortcuts and using them effectively. In addition to gaining a lead, these dirt-road offshoots are the perfect place to activate the Jammer to disappear off the cops' radar entirely.

EMP
An invisible homing missile of magnetic devastation. Don't think of it as a projectile, because it's actually more like jet combat. Players must hold a steady bead to lock-on effectively.

My How You've Changed Things change, the Need for Speed remains

Hot Pursuit (2010)
Play as cops and racers

Shift (2009)
Realism heavy



Undercover (2008)
Plot, ahoy!

ProStreet (2007)
The X-Games of racing?

Carbon (2006)
Open-world inner-city questing

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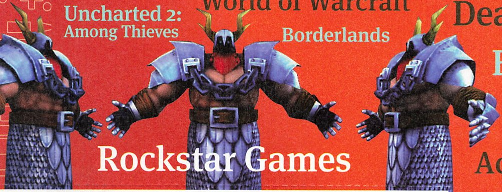
Diablo III

Electronic Arts

Gears of W



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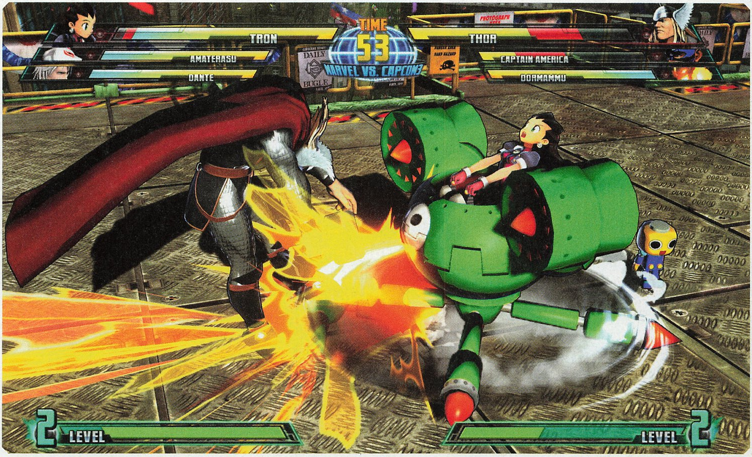
TRON
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DANTE
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MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3
THOR
CAPTAIN AMERICA
DORMAMMU
2 LEVEL
LEVEL 2

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **March 2011** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**

Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Fate of Two Worlds

Fighting game history in the making

Surprising roster updates guarantee dimension-shattering matches in *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds*.

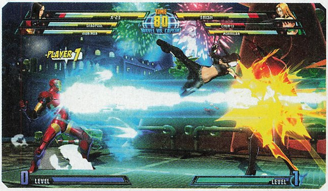
Marvel has made some formidable choices. Getting the call for the first time are Thor, Super-Skrull, god-tyrant Dormammu, and Wolverine's genetic twin sister X23. Not to be outdone, Capcom is countering with newcomers Viewtiful Joe, *Resident Evil 5's* Chris Redfield, demonic love interest Trish of *Devil May Cry* fame, and *Okami's* wolf Amaterasu.

The heart and soul of *MvC3* is its three-on-three team-based fight mechanics and the gameplay wholly built around it. One of the new techniques in *MvC3* is an aerial tag that lets players instantaneously hit an opponent and tag in another fighter while in the midst of an air combo.

The moves are "bigger, bolder, and more over the top," says Seth Killian, Capcom's director of online community strategy. The Capcom cast will have more balanced move sets this time around to make them more competitive against their Marvel counterparts while still remaining true to character. *Devil May Cry's* Dante, for example, already has more moves than any character in Capcom's illustrious fighting history, according to Killian. **JARIK SIKAT**

DOCTOR DOOM
AMATERASU
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3
LEVEL
LEVEL 1

Spider-Man meets his arch-nemesis in The White Pile. Hey, it's no more silly than the Spider-Mobile. Look it up!


X-23
DEADPOOL
IRON MAN
TIME 80
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3
TRISH
CHUN-LI
MORRIGAN
PLAYER 1
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LEVEL 1

Capcom is fine tuning ways for teammates to rotate in and out of the fighting while keeping the primary fighter less vulnerable.

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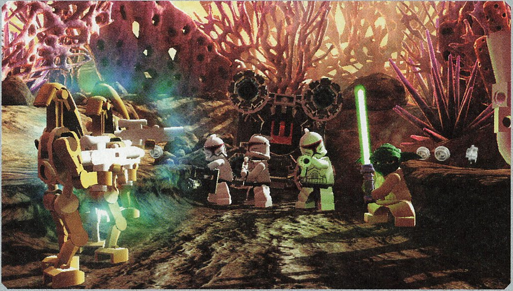
The latest on...

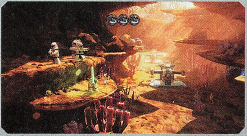
New shots, new games, new info

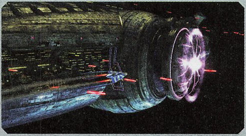
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars

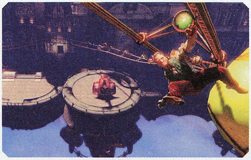
Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **LucasArts**
Dev **Traveller's Tales**

The upgraded look of *LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars* turned our heads like we were tween Anakin crushing on Princess Amidala. Exquisite lighting and environmental detail realistically recreate *The Clone Wars* film and animated series' worlds while losing none of the franchise's playfulness. Our romp through the ground-oriented Ambush level revealed expanded Force powers that let us use a battle droid's firepower against his cohorts, while the Shadow of the Malevolence level's flight combat had us assault, land on, and ultimately decimate an enormous attack cruiser. Take that, Sidious!





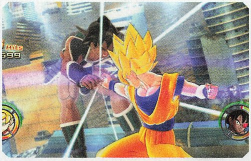




BioShock: Infinite

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Irrational Games**

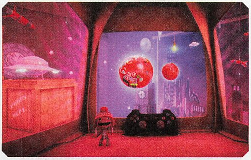
In accordance with the prophecy, *BioShock* will make a glorious return in 2012 with *BioShock: Infinite.* Gone is the familiar waterlogged Rapture, replaced by the airborne city of Columbia. We should have it just in time to marvel at it before the world ends at which point, we imagine, we will feel fine.



Dragon Ball: Raging Blast 2

Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Spike**

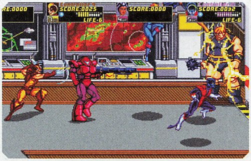
Some might consider it just another kick in the Dragon Balls, but fans of the epic anime series will appreciate the 20 newcomers that round out the fighting game's cast to over 90 characters. Four of the 14 destructible battlefields are all-new and the game's tweaked visuals now sport a cel-shaded style as well.



LittleBigPlanet 2

Format **PS3** ETA **Q1 2011** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Media Molecule**

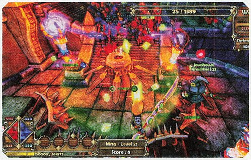
Creativity seemed to have no boundaries in Sackboy's first outting—but players won't just build their own levels in *LittleBigPlanet 2,* they'll also be able to create music and use that music to shape their levels as well. Sequences of music can be set to trigger different actions and effects within a level. How freaking cool is that?



X-Men: The Arcade Game

Format **PSN** ETA **Holiday** Pub **Konami** Dev **Konami**

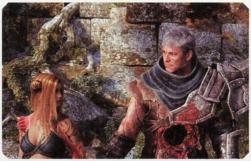
This is an exact copy of the original 1992 *X-Men* arcade game, minus the quarter munching and mom yelling at us for "losing" our allowance. Players assume the role of their favorite mutant as they slash, punch, and fire lasers out of their eyes to take down Magneto. All hail old-school gameplay and pixely goodness.



Dungeon Defenders

Format **PSN** ETA **Holiday** Pub **Reverb** Dev **Trendy Ent.**

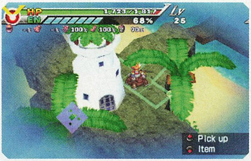
Tower defense games and RPGs just had a baby and its name is *Dungeon Defenders*. Players can pick character classes based on different weapon and tower specializations and fight wave after wave of enemies as they defend their precious Eternia Crystals. It's definitely one of PSN's most intriguing offerings of late.



Knights Contract

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Game Republic**

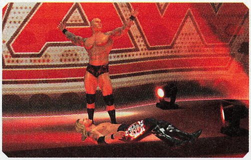
Knights Contract hits all the sweet spots: awesome weapons, huge monsters, and a scantily clad lady helping the player out with shiny magic. Set in a fictional medieval Europe with dark fantasy elements, players will have to work with their companion to defeat the baddies and solve puzzles along the way.



Z.H.P.: Unclosing Ranger VS Darkdeath Evilman

Format **PSP** ETA **October** Pub **NIS** Dev **NIS**

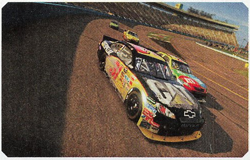
We might not know much about this game, but that's not stopping us from changing our name to Darkdeath Evilman. The team that brought us *Disgaea* now brings an RPG in which we customize everything: our headquarters, music, equipment, and every aspect of our characters' bodies.



WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's**

Let's get ready to... [sentence cannot be finished because we'd have to pay a royalty]! *SmackDown vs. Raw* returns in macho spandex-covered glory with an all-new WWE Universe mode that lets players customize and create their own plot twist-laden calendar of matches.



NASCAR: The Game 2011

Format **PS3** ETA **Q1 2011** Pub **Activision** Dev **Eutechnyx**

The NASCAR license has switched hands from Electronic Arts to Activision, leaving us hopeful for an awesome new interpretation of the popular racing series. While we've yet to see the gameplay firsthand, this screenshot already has us itching to make left turns and thank our long list of sponsors.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲Import Mania
A legal way to get us some *Cho Aniki* on PS3? The new PSN import store makes us all tingly. In a good funny way.

▲Rock Stars
Rock Band 3's Pro mode even has PTOM's music-game grouches on board.

▲The Duke!
In development since 1563, *Duke Nukem: Forever* will finally see release.

▼The Duke?
In development since 1563, *Duke Nukem: Forever* will finally see release.

▼Paying for Online Play
PTOM is divided on this one, but we all agree that a carrot is better than a stick when it comes to used-games.

Ugly Americans
Astute social commentary or a funhouse mirror reflecting our worst qualities? Either way, *Dead Rising 2's* panicked populace ain't pretty.

LittleBIG Planet™ 2

"beyond a sequel"
- EGMi

"it's going to be amazing."
-Kotaku

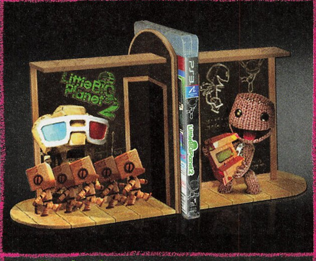
"a full-scale evolution"
- Game Informer

Pre Order the Collector's Edition TODAY!

A crafty, must-have collection hand-picked for LittleBigPlanet™ fans, full of exclusive collectibles and exclusive digital content featuring beloved Disney brands and some of your very favorite PlayStation® franchises, that every LittleBigPlanet™ fan will treasure.

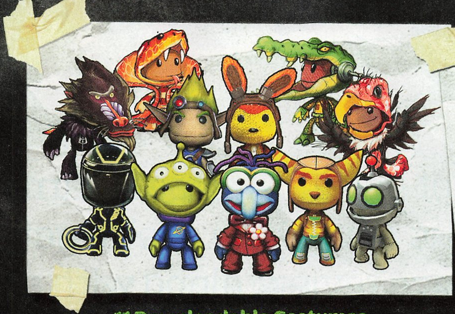
INCLUDES

LBP2 Game

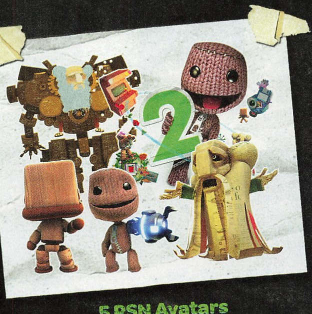


Exclusive LBP2 Bookends

7" Sackboy Plush



11 Downloadable Costumes



5 PSN Avatars

Available November 16th

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for rating information

PS3
PlayStation®3
PlayStation®Network

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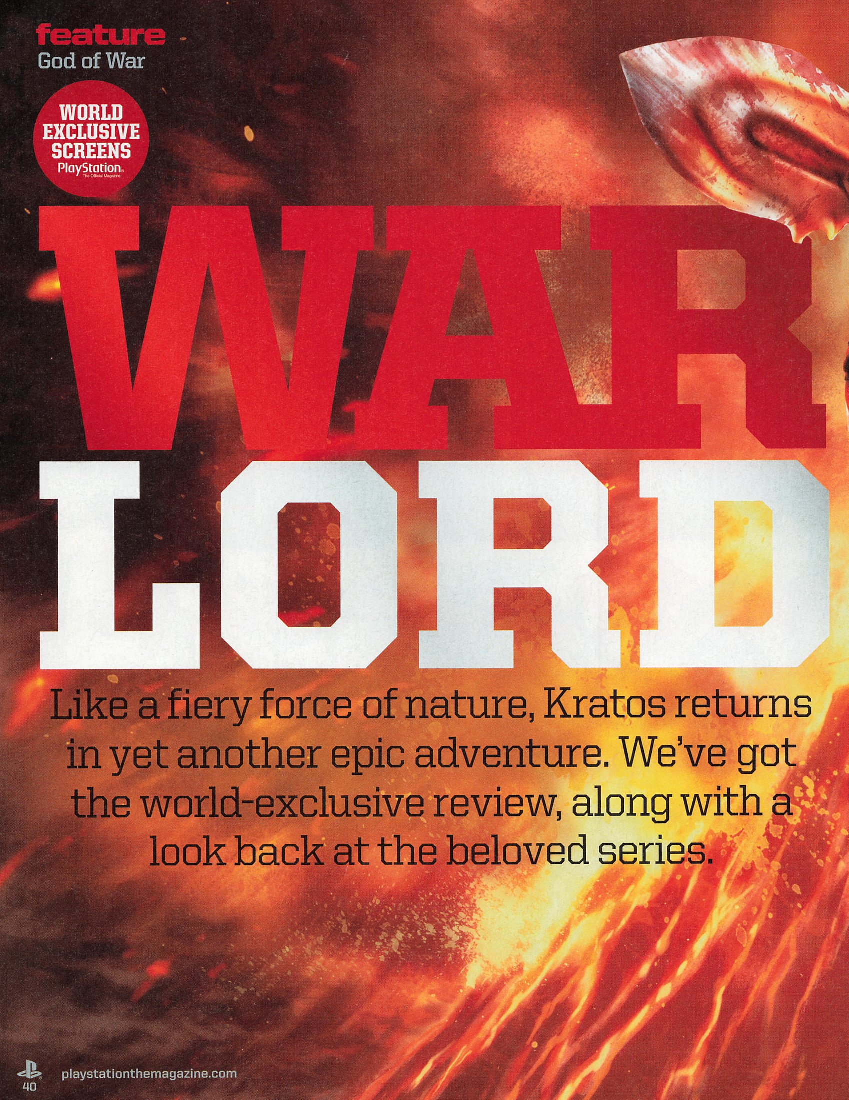
WORLD EXCLUSIVE SCREENS
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

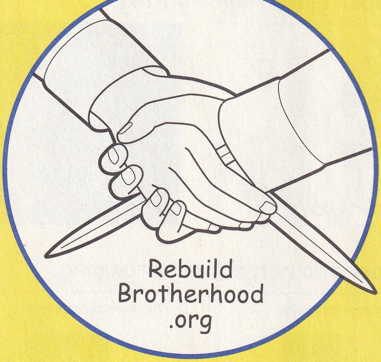


WAR LORD

Like a fiery force of nature, Kratos returns in yet another epic adventure. We've got the world-exclusive review, along with a look back at the beloved series.

Rebuilding Trust
With your
Friends

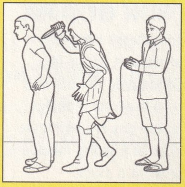
AFTER PLAYING ASSASSIN'S CREED® BROTHERHOOD MULTIPLAYER



For instant trust Call 1-877-OK-GET-TRUST

ADMITTING YOU HAVE A PROBLEM.

One in two gamers participates in potentially untrustworthy behavior while playing Assassin's Creed Brotherhood multiplayer.



And since I just finished playing the game and was completely cool that means *you're the one who needs help.*

But that's why you're holding this pamphlet. It's full of helpful information that will enable you to run around stabbing your friends in the back for hours without sacrificing your friendships. Additional resources are available online, and we put the contact information in a bunch of different places on this pamphlet. Just not here.

Kill them with Kindness. And Weapons.

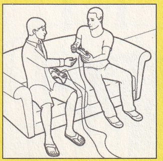
Many of us are taught to trust one another until that person gives us a reason not to. *And Assassin's Creed® Brotherhood is going to give you plenty of reasons.* But with a few **simple** modifications to your game play, you can pretend to unzip each other's spinal columns without hurting anyone's feelings. *Let's begin.*

Make it so your friends don't hate you.
Visit www.RebuildBrotherhood.org

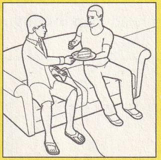
Is it still friendly fire if you use a knife?

Purposefully killing someone on your own team is the lowest of trustless lows. If you accidentally victimize a buddy with friendly fire, make amends with a peace offering.

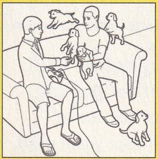
First offense:
Offer your controller



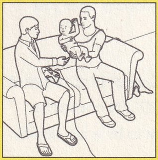
Second offense:
Offer your food



3rd offense:
Offer your puppies



Fourth offense:
Offer your first born child



Nobody knows. But in-game teams are bonded by more than a colored, tinted overlay or guild name. *They are also bonded by a sacred trust that your teammates won't kill you just to be funny.* And while defense for this betrayal is usually rooted in comic relief, the reality is that **same team killing is a traditional sign of self-destructive behavior** conceived through insecurity about one's gaming abilities.

These players need to be nurtured. Let them know that as a team, you are one singular entity sharing your natural talents and skills to achieve a common goal. *And if that doesn't work, kill them before they screw up the mission.*

We have all been tempted from time to time to slash at the forbidden fruit that is your teammate's carotid artery. But a little tenderness and understanding goes a long way toward keeping your team member's blades pointed toward those who deserve it.

If websites were tools, this website would be the ultimate tool for rebuilding trust.
www.RebuildBrotherhood.org

The Road to Recovery

While completely awesome, this pamphlet is only the first step toward rebuilding trust with your friends after playing Assassin's Creed® Brotherhood multiplayer. But don't worry. We also made a website. It's a lot like this pamphlet. But it also has **videos** and **pictures**. And **words**. But the words are different. The meaning, however, is the same. See you there!

www.RebuildBrotherhood.org

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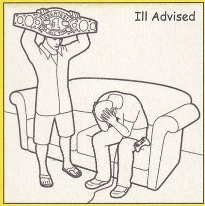
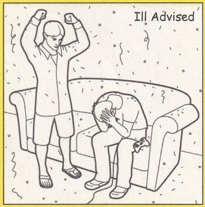
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

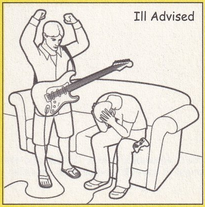
ASSASSIN'S
CREED
BROTHERHOOD

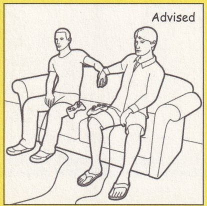
Yes, Your friend saw what you just did to him. He was there. No need to tell him about it.

Dude. It was a nice move. You got him. He didn't see it coming. **But there's really no purpose in vocally reciting the event verbatim.** Exhibiting that much joy in de-spining your friend is a sure-fire way to diminish trust. So if you find yourself repeating out loud exactly what happened on screen, remind yourself that in addition to feelings, your friend also has eyes. *And he just saw it.*





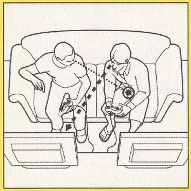




We don't know how to use Twitter.
Visit www.RebuildBrotherhood.org

HOW TO IDENTIFY SCREEN LOOKERS AND WHERE THEIR WEAK POINT IS LOCATED.

Wandering eyes have driven a wedge between many trusting relationships. *Especially when those eyes wander off your friend's screen and onto yours.* **It's an unwritten rule that screen looking is off limits.** So if you suspect your partner's gaze is drifting, a simple tap between the legs should set things straight. Once his eyes uncross, they should stay on his own head's up display.



THEY CAN'T UN-TRUST YOU IF THEY DON'T KNOW IT'S YOU.

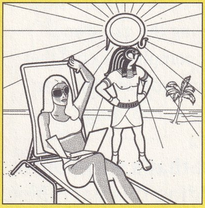
Usually when someone approaches you in a mask it means you're either getting robbed or they want your candy. *Either way, it's not a look that inspires trust.* But when used correctly, hiding your identity can spare all sorts of awkwardness between friends. Especially when your relationship is based on back slashing.

That's why pre-ordering Assassin's Creed® Brotherhood at **Gamestop** unlocks the HARLEQUIN character on multiplayer maps. He wears a mask to hide his identity. That means your friend will have no idea you're the one who exposed his kidneys with knives. Instant trust.

For instant trust Call 1-877-OK-GET-TRUST

TRUST BUILDING MASKS THROUGH HISTORY.

The HARLEQUIN is not the only character in history to successfully use a mask to encourage trust. Here are a few others who have used identity deception to keep people feeling good about them.

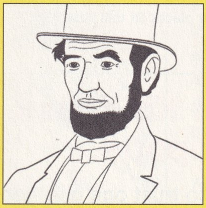


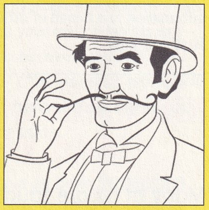
The SUN GOD RA.

Now that we have things like science and lost things like the ozone layer, *people find it hard to trust the sun.* But back in the day Ra had quite a number of trusting followers. And he wore a mask.

Nice work, Ra.

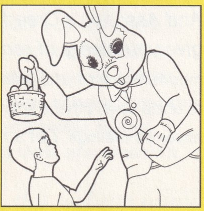
ABE LINCOLN. How do you get a shattered union to trust you after a civil war? You wear a mask. Or in this case a mask of beard. That's a mask so subtle it barely even counts as a mask. *Now he's on money.*





THE EASTER BUNNY.

In some cultures he would be considered an abomination so vile he'd inspire nightmares. But here, *he's loved and welcomed into our homes while we sleep.* *That is one trust-inducing mask.*

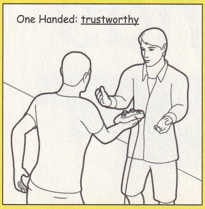


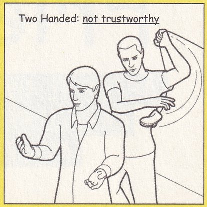
Toll Free Trust. 24/7 1-877-OK-GET-TRUST

HIGHLY VISUAL TRUST BUILDING TIPS.

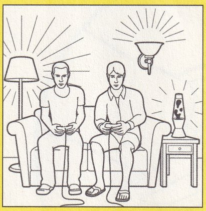
These are important drawings that can teach you how to keep things easy-peasy while pretending to slice up your buddies.

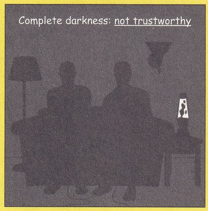
How to hand your friend a controller.


One Handed: trustworthy

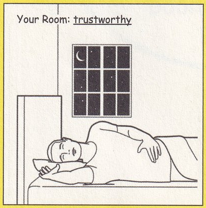

Two Handed: not trustworthy

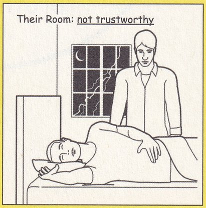
Proper game room lighting.



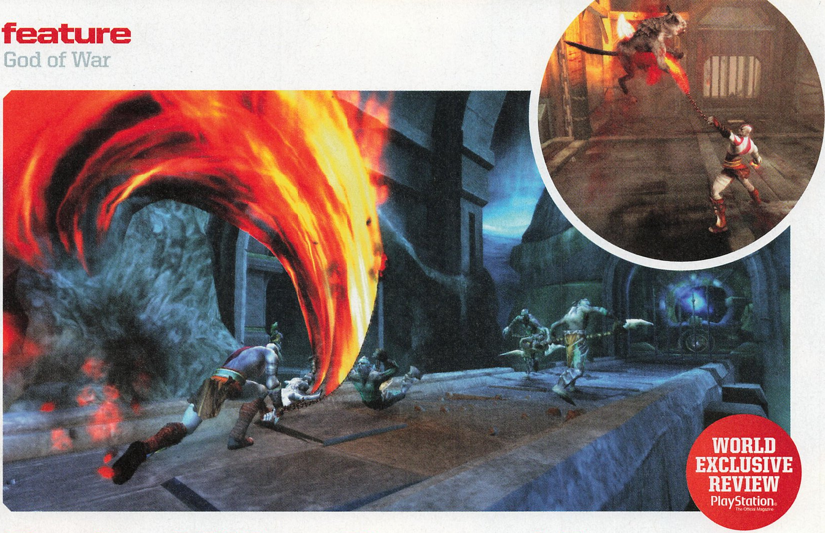

Complete darkness: not trustworthy

Where to retreat after gaming.


Your Room: trustworthy


Their Room: not trustworthy

For additional tips, videos, illustrations and animated gifs about this topic, click here. www.RebuildBrotherhood.org



WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

God of War Ghost of Sparta

Hell hath no fury like a Spartan scorned

It's a strange relationship we have with Kratos. He suffers, we smile. He rages, we rejoice. He destroys, we delight.

We can attach all kinds of big words to this peculiar bond. Sadomasochism? Not quite. *Schadenfreude?* Perhaps a bit. An interactive statement on our societal obsession with violence? Nah, probably not.

Whatever the case, Kratos is back in his second PSP outing and he is once again angry—righteously so—which means it's up to us to help guide the newly ascended god of war through hell and back so our troubled hero can find some small satisfaction that's not likely to come, thanks to the ceaseless meddling of the gods, the fates, and just about everyone else both mortal and immortal.

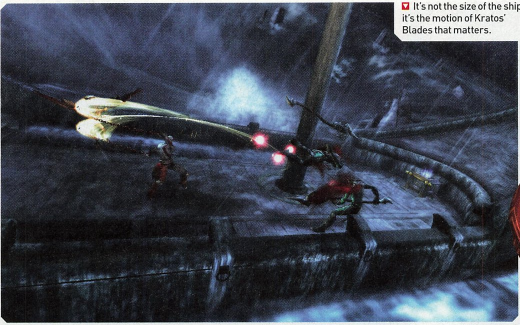
Set after the events of the original PS2 *God of War, Ghost of Sparta* begins with Kratos securely in his role as the replacement for Ares—the god he killed in the very first game. But all is not comfortable with the recently deified Spartan general; he's still haunted by disturbing visions, one of which he thinks he has the power to change. And so Kratos casts off for Atlantis, seeking answers and hoping against hope that he might finally set *something* right in his life.

Info

Format PSP **Pub** SCEA **Dev** Ready At Dawn **Price** $39.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** Indulging in the simple joy of punching everything in the face. Because everything deserves it.

Death Becomes Him

It's a familiar setup for *God of War* fans, but that's not all that's reprised in *Ghost of Sparta*. Indeed, everything about *Sparta* is immediately recognizable, including the luscious graphics. It's no hyperbole to say *Sparta* is easily among the best-looking PSP games and not just because of the high polygon count (or whatever else it is that makes the imagery so rich). Beyond any technical achievement, *Sparta* has *convincing* graphics. This is due in part to how Kratos himself moves through his world—the way the camera shakes when he thuds down from a great height or the way an entire level will waver and wobble under the weight of Kratos and his powerful actions. Combine that with a majestic score and the pitch-perfect sound effects—everything from war horns blaring in the background to the



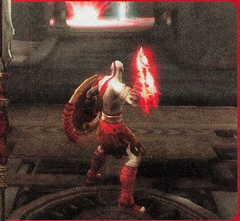
It's not the size of the ship, it's the motion of Kratos' Blades that matters.

"It's no hyperbole to say *Sparta* is easily among the best-looking PSP games"

sonic booms of Kratos' Blades of Athena as they shatter the armor worn by a defensive-minded Cyclops—and *Sparta* offers an immersive experience on par with many of the best PS3 games. (Just be sure to play this one with great headphones for the very best experience.)

Combat is also what we've come to expect from *God of War:* that addictive mixture of light and heavy attacks, dodges and blocks, magic and special moves, all of which is equally enjoyable whether buttonmashing or strategically surviving the tougher encounters. Kratos is an undeniable powerhouse, which means part of the fantasy in any *God of War* game is to dominate *everything*—a desire that's fulfilled early and often as we dispatch wave after wave of enemies, endlessly amused as we uncover new ways to sharpen our weapons on their spleens. There are rabid dogs to be punted, Medusas to behead, Minotaurs to be man-handled, and Cyclops in need of having their sole eye ripped from its socket. And, as is now typical, anyone who poses even the most modest challenge can be demolished with a context-sensitive quick-time finisher—an oh-so-satisfying reward that never gets old in the dozen or so hours that it takes to beat the game.

Also commendable: the way *Sparta* layers on the enemies. Sure, there are massive multipart battles against singular foes, like the opening one with the gargantuan tentacled Scylla. But *Sparta's* biggest combat achievement is taking all those mid-level baddies, getting us familiar with their strengths and weaknesses, then strategically remixing them in various combinations that force us to use our entire toolset. Taking on a gaggle of wraith-like Death Minions alongside a pair of lumbering Armored Cyclops requires a completely different approach from fighting a flock of Harpies that swoop down on us while we struggle against a duo of lightning-ball-wielding Geryon. Where our Blades are best in one case, the new Arms of Sparta are essential in others. Where magic is almost useless in some situations, it's necessary for survival in others. And where a relentless frenetic approach is our only hope in some showdowns, others require us to patiently dodge, block, and time every offensive move.



Arms of Sparta

Because it's not enough to have a pair of Blades attached at the forearm by chains, enhanced with fire, and fully capable of unleashing devastating combos, *God of War: Ghost of Sparta* offers a new set of cutlery in the Arms of Sparta. A spear-and-shield combo Kratos wielded back when he was merely a Spartan general, these were kept in pristine condition by a loyal follower and are returned to Kratos midway through the game. So how do the Arms stack up against the Blades?

Sharp

Up close, the spear is great at delivering a flurry of devastating stabs. From a distance, the spear can be tossed over and over again, picking off enemies on ledges or, occasionally, letting us strafe for the first time in the series.

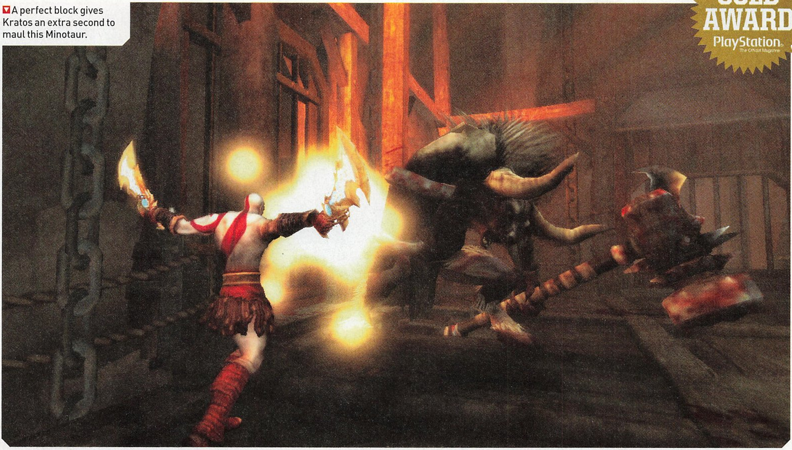
Dull

It's too slow when facing a horde, too small for mid-range attackers, and too limited against armored attackers, which require the flame-enhanced Blades to bust through their defenses.

Final Cut

Not our favorite *God of War* weaponry, but it's fun to pull out in the right circumstances.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine



A perfect block gives Kratos an extra second to maul this Minotaur.

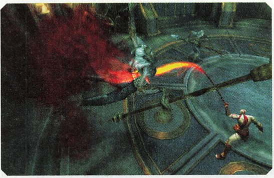
> "*Sparta* is Kratos' journey to save his long-lost brother"

While familiar is nice—especially when it comes to *God of War—Sparta's* Kratos also comes equipped with some killer new moves. Along with the aforementioned Arms of Sparta, Kratos has several new skills like the sublimely satisfying Hyperion Charge. Hold Left-shoulder and Circle, and Kratos will grab a nearby foe, thrust him to the ground, then pummel said foe until it gasps its final breath. Early on, this led to all kinds of sadistic experimentation as we tried the Hyperion Charge on different enemies simply to marvel at the creative brutality, further exploring how this move differs from Kratos' standard grapple. Those crab-like Scylla Brood, for example, will either be ripped in half (standard grapple) or lassoed around before being unleashed, flipping over a few other of the swarming brood in the process (Hyperion Charge).

We also enjoyed Thera's Bane, a new powerup imbuing our Blades with deadly fire. This not only enhances the Blades' strength but also helps us beat back otherwise-impenetrable armored and mechanical enemies. Drawing from a meter that replenishes over time, Thera's Bane adds yet another layer of complexity to the combat by requiring us to time its usage with dodges and defensive maneuvers when facing particular foes. It also looks damn cool when Kratos unleashes his whirling flame-enhanced Cyclone of Chaos.

But it's here we also encountered some of the issues with the game's controls. Yes, *Sparta* should be commended for figuring out how to map such a broad move-set to the PSP and, for the most part, it works. But every now and then we'd be undone by the delicate balancing act required by mapping special moves *and* blocking to the Left-shoulder, Thera's Bane to the Right-shoulder, and dodging to a combined press of both shoulder buttons. Once we wrapped our head around this convoluted scheme, it worked for the most part, but occasionally we'd forget, or we didn't time things exactly right, causing us to flame-on instead of dodging (for example), leading to an untimely death. And though it only happened a handful of times, we inadvertently put our PSP into sleep mode by brushing the base of our index finger against the power button while flailing around with the shoulder and face buttons.

ProTip: Do not try to remake Kratos into the God of Cupcakes and Meaningful Discussions About Current Affairs.



We also would have welcomed a bit more variety in the setting. While we appreciate that Atlantis is new to *God of War*—along with an assortment of mythological denizens including Thanatos, his daughter Erinyes, and even King Midas—we could've used a bit more sunlight. Atlantis is so damp and dreary we could almost feel the chill in Kratos' bones after spending countless hours down there. Even the time spent in a magma-filled volcano beneath Atlantis—along with a brief visit to the colorful Sparta (be sure to stop by the brothel)—couldn't dispel the relentless grayness of the game's setting.

Sibling Rivalry

But those quibbles are minor, having a negligible effect on the overall game. Indeed, *Sparta* is not only a great PSP game but a great *God of War* game with an absolutely incredible ending. Without giving too much away, *Sparta* quickly becomes Kratos' journey to save his long-lost brother Deimos. Along the way he encounters his birth mother who reveals surprising details on Kratos' background, then finishes their meeting in a very satisfying (by *God of War* standards) manner. He runs afoul of Poseidon, explaining much of their animosity in *God of War III*. He continues his troubled relationship with Athena, adding layers of depth to the entire *God of War* storyline. And when he eventually finds Deimos, we're treated to a sequence of story and gameplay events that are chilling, memorable, and (most important) incredibly fun.

By the end of *Sparta*—after the credits roll and the final post-credits morsel of story plays out—Kratos has clearly earned his spot as the angriest, loneliest hero in gaming.

All of which makes Kratos the most unlikely of heroes. And yet, as we said earlier, it's a strange relationship we have with Kratos, one that defies easy explanation—but thanks to incredible gaming experiences like *Sparta*, might best be described as love.

GARY STEINMAN

PlayStation The Official Magazine
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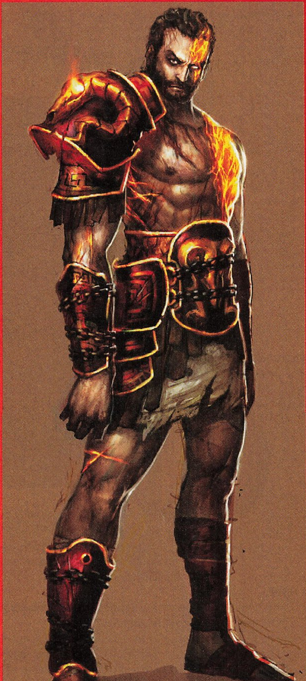
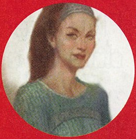
Family Affair

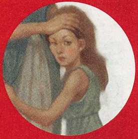
Meet Deimos, Kratos' darling baby brother

As we learn early in the journey, Deimos was taken away when the two boys were training together, stolen by shady gods who assumed Deimos was the one fated to destroy Olympus. Kratos also meets his birth mother early in *Ghost of Sparta*. Judging from his familial relationships revealed in previous *God of War* games (right), it's safe to say that blood begets blood when it comes to Kratos.

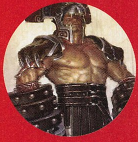




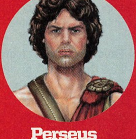
Wife
Kratos' unnamed spouse who he accidently killed in a murderous rage.



Calliope
Kratos' murdered daughter. He meets her in Hades, but has to give her up.



Hercules
Half-brother and demigod, Hercules faces Kratos in mortal combat and loses.



Perseus
Being a son of Zeus, he's technically Kratos' kin. Naturally, Kratos kills him.

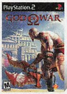
Gods of Game

Five directors, five games, dozens of secrets revealed

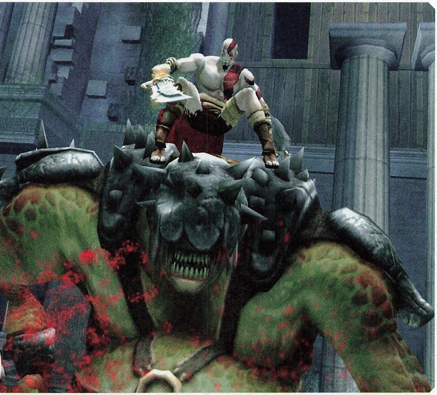
Pity poor Kratos: a former Spartan captain on the verge of getting his butt kicked, he sells his soul to the god of war, Ares, in exchange for a victory. Ares agrees, killing his opponents. He then gives Kratos the Blades of Chaos, incredible power, and sets him off on a merrily destructive path that includes our hero accidentally butchering his family. Thus begins an epic, blood-soaked journey for revenge.

To celebrate the forthcoming *God of War: Ghost of Sparta*, we gathered the game directors for each *God of War* release and demanded some answers...

God of War



PS2, 2005
Athena sends Kratos to kill Ares, the current god of war, which he's pretty keen on—if she'll remove his family-killing memories. Kratos kills lots of things and eventually Ares, but Athena reveals she can only offer forgiveness. Kratos tries to kill himself, but is saved and installed as the new god of war.



David Jaffe, Game Director

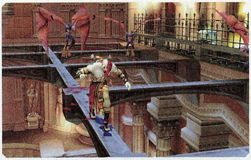
Favorite moment from your own game?
With *God of War*, I had the great opportunity to make my ultimate game—my dream game—and we had a lot of money, a lot of time, and a great team. Because of that, I enjoyed 95 percent of it equally, only because it was edited so tightly that every single moment in that game was meant to be there. Everything was written like a novel or a musical score; the game never deviated off into filler or a pure play-mechanics loop. It was, literally, very scripted.

Favorite moment from another *GOW*?
Each game has one. In *Chains of Olympus*, the interactive Calliope push in the Elysium fields. In *God of War II*, the puzzle where you had to pick up a dead body and put it in the current of the river and let it rotate around the room, and then you picked him up and used him as an object—I thought that was a fantastic puzzle. In *God of War III*, it was the moment I killed Cronos; I literally felt for the first time the promise delivered of playing a Jerry Bruckheimer summer action film. I haven't played the new one; everyone tells me it's amazing, but I have not played it yet.

One of your toughest—and proudest—accomplishments?
From the pure standpoint of design, the game does a really good job of making players feel like they're on an adventure because of the blend of combat and puzzles and exploration. All of them were satisfying enough that we could use them equally and the game never felt like it devolved into, "Well, it's a brawler with a little bit of puzzles." We found that alchemy, we found that combination of percentages so that a lot players walked away from it and couldn't label it as a play genre. It was more of an experience. That's what makes me most proud as a designer.

What's a key detail that players might have overlooked?
I love, for example, when Kratos does the rock climbing and he leaps from one rock to the next—how they were able to animate him having that momentum and inertia when he lands. It reminded me very much of *Heart of Darkness* [PSone]. I don't know if people

"See, this is what happens when you don't floss after every meal."



overlooked it, but I don't think they get the same kind of brain chemicals firing that I do when I see that happening in the game.

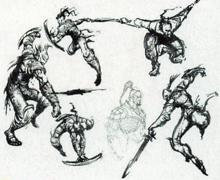
I'm really proud of some of the camera angles, because they remind me of the old *King's Quest* games when I was a kid, where a lot of times they pull the camera really far back and you would be just this four-pixel thing walking in the distance and it felt very cinematic to me. I love that there are moments in *God of War* where we do the same. Like when Kratos blows the horn and there's the parting of the sand and he runs through it to get to Cronos.

A lot of the context-sensitive moves took forever for us to be able to really pull off. Things like taking a skull and slamming it into a keyhole, or kicking open a door, or pulling a lever while you're swimming under water—all of those things I was very, very pushy about getting in because it felt like you were actually living in that space versus going up to a door, hitting a button, and the door magically opens. That's not a big deal now, but go back and play a lot of the games we took inspiration from—if you leave a room in *Ico,* the camera fades out then fades back in and you're in the next room. Same thing with *Devil May Cry.* So building in the idea that you were really interacting with the space, it was another one of those ingredients to make you feel like you were going on the adventure.

What new elements did your game bring to the genre?

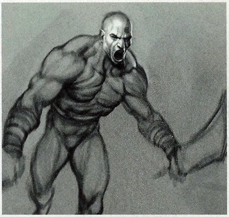
A lot of people say *God of War* did the context-sensitive moves first, embedding them into combat. We certainly didn't steal it, but the game that inspired us heavily, mechanically, was a Hulk game where the Hulk could pick people up and then branch into different combat moves. The combat guys and I saw that and said that's a great way to build unique animations that sell characters into the actual combat system. Also, while we didn't invent it by any means, we probably brought the idea of expressing the personality of the character in the actual interactive—and not just a cutscene—in everything from opening doors to combat. That was a big mandate for us.

Art of War

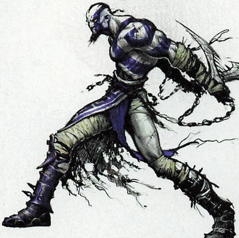


Kratos

Early concepts for Kratos bore little resemblance to Jaffe's desire to create a "very visceral, brutal character." He adds, "We kept going back to Ed Norton in *American History X*, saying, 'That guy, he really represents the brutal nature I want.'"



All White
The ash-covered skin came when Jaffe saw a black-and-white Kratos.



The Blue Man
According to Jaffe, a key artist was Charlie Wen: "We just stripped more and more of his armor off until he was just this guy in a loincloth." Red was originally rejected for being "too Rome," but it eventually went on to win out over the "less violent" blue.

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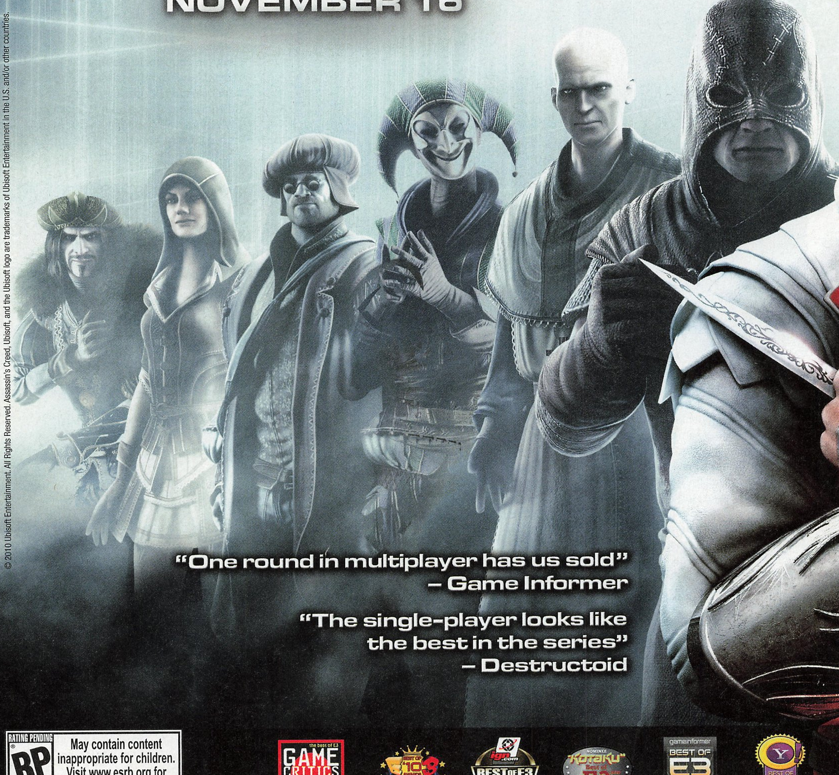

"One round in multiplayer has us sold"
– Game Informer

"The single-player looks like
the best in the series"
– Destructoid

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God of War II

PS2, 2007
Kratos is a surly god, causing Zeus to strip him of his power. In a quest for revenge Kratos kills the Sisters of Fate for not changing his past, almost kills Zeus, and kills Athena by accident. He then finds out Zeus is his father and, apocalyptically pissed, goes back in time to get the Titans to help him attack Olympus.

Cory Barlog, Game Director

Favorite moment from your own game?
I'm torn. I have two favorite moments. The first moment is Kratos giving up his powers. I really like that that was actually in gameplay. Instead of just starting the game without all your powers, you go through a sequence of events to give them up. I also really liked the Icarus fight, when you're falling through the air and just beating the hell out of Icarus. But between those two I'd have to say it's the first moment—giving up your powers.

Favorite moment from another *GOW*?
The final boss fight in *God of War,* when you fight yourself and hug your wife and child to give them some of your health. It's just awesome. That's a standout moment in all of the games. And I can't really share my ultimate favorite moment because the game hasn't been released yet. *Ghost of Sparta* for me is everything we wanted to do in the first two games and never got to do. It's the apex of in-game storytelling. There's some f-king awesome moments in that game.

One of your toughest—and proudest—accomplishments?
The Pegasus continues to be the thing that amazes me that we even got finished. I fought with the lead programmer for quite a while about whether or not that should just be a cinematic. The art guys said it would take forever, and the cinematic guys said they could do it really quickly. The tech guy was just like, "You're an idiot, it's never gonna happen." I kept telling everyone to trust me. There were many times that everyone said: "See, I told you, it's never gonna get done." We ended up doing it. Sadly it wasn't utilized in the last part of the game. When you get the Phoenix and ride it up to the Temple of Fate, it was supposed to be another Pegasus segment. That was a bummer to me, but I'm still proud we pulled it off and didn't succumb to just making it a cinematic.

What's a key detail that players might have overlooked?
Players overlooked it, but I think it was also a failure on our part in implementation: the transition of Gaia going from the narrator to being a character. We made some missteps there in not dropping some hints before it was revealed. We cut a bunch of stuff that has Kratos questioning hearing a voice in his own head, so the narrator breaks the plane for a moment before she reveals herself. So that was something players didn't fully catch—that throughout the first game the narrator was someone watching Kratos the whole time.

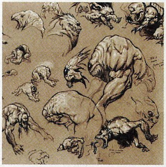
What new elements did your game bring to the series?
The resolution has Kratos inadvertently bringing free will to mankind. In the first game, he gives the world hope but that was affixed *after* the game was done. For me, that ending was a very singular thing: Kratos did what he did and benefited directly from it, but nobody else benefited. In the second one, he brings something to mankind that he never intended on giving. He benefited the world through his journey of selfish vengeance.

Art of War

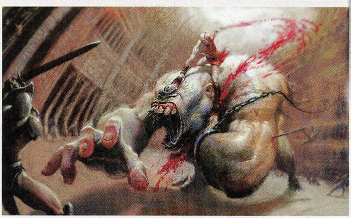
Cyclopses

God of War

Art director Ken Feldman describes the earliest cyclops as a "big ape." It was a crude creation roughed up for the first *God of War* prototype. He adds, "I think if we had released the game with him in it, though, I wouldn't be sitting here today." Initial designs (far right) focused on an almost alien, brutish design before settling on the more familliar one-eyed giant.



▲ Tried and Tested
The art team produced numerous sketches, poses, and angles to help get a feel for designs.



Kratos aced the audition for *Dancing With the Ancient Greek Stars.*

God of War: Chains Of Olympus

PSP, 2008

Ten years before the events of the first game, Athena has Kratos trying to return sun god Helios to the sky. He ends up in Hades, confronting the goddess Persephone who's trying to end creation. He kills her and Athena saves him from Hell, leaving him atop a mountain. Um, thanks?

Ru Weerasuriya, Game Director

Favorite moment from your own game?
The struggle between Kratos and his daughter Calliope in Elysium. Relaying emotion through gameplay to the player is always something that's hard to do. It took a lot of work throughout the game to build up to that moment.

Favorite moment from another *GOW*?
The fight between Kratos and his younger self inside the Temple of Ares in *Ghost of Sparta*. That moment provides a novel perspective and a different type of gameplay to the player.

What's a key detail that players might have overlooked?
The thought and research that goes into naming places and characters. Most people probably gloss over this, but fans who know their Greek mythology really appreciate the attention to detail.

What new elements did your game bring to the series?
Chains of Olympus not only proved that a *God of War* game experience could be translated to a portable system with no sacrifices in quality and expectation, but it also gave the player a way to experience Kratos' story in a much more personal way. We continued with that same thinking for *Ghost of Sparta*.

Fondest memories?
When we set off to start [developer] Ready At Dawn. It was as much a scary time as it was rewarding. We were working from home with little to no idea of whether or not we would succeed. Seven years later, those memories have become more and more important as the company grew.

Proudest accomplishment?
Creating a company and a team that could deliver AAA games and instilling and nurturing a culture that sought to uphold that commitment. The proudest moment was seeing the team embrace and deliver on that promise with every game we released.

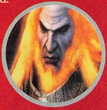
Defining Moments

Find out how gods created this man...

Killing His Family

This is the origin of all Kratos' rage and anguish. While serving Ares, Kratos is ordered to slaughter all inhabitants of a village that worships Athena. Despite his foreboding, he does. After his bloodlust dissipates, he realizes the last two victims were his wife and daughter. The village oracle curses him and binds his dead family's ashes to his skin, which is why he's known as the Ghost of Sparta.

Becoming the God of War



At the end of *God of War*, Kratos kills his former master Ares, but Athena reveals she cannot remove the memories that haunt him. Kratos tries to kill himself by jumping off a cliff but Athena saves and lifts him to Olympus, saying he has served the gods well and a throne awaits him: that of the god of war.

All on Olympus Must Die!

Kratos corners Zeus at the end of *God of War II* and begins stabbing him. Athena appears, saving Zeus. She tells Kratos that Zeus *is* Olympus and he must not persist in this course, as all the gods will stand against him. Kratos: "If all on Olympus will deny me my vengeance, then all on Olympus will die!"

One more time

In Hades, Kratos chases his daughter Calliope, longing for a reunion. Persephone tells him to give up his powers to prove himself worthy: after he does, she cackles and reveals her plan to destroy Olympus. To regain his power and stand a chance against Persephone, Kratos must give up his chance of seeing his daughter ever again. And he does.

God of War III

PS3, 2010
Kratos has reunited the Titans: gigantic, elemental gods who preceded Zeus and his Olympian deities. With an army of massive, angry mountains on his side he then charges Mount Olympus, intent on smashing the lightning out of all the gods once and for all, and finally claiming his revenge.

Stig Asmussen, Game Director

Favorite moment from your own game?
If I had to pick only one, it would have to be the Cronos encounter. Looking back at it, I'm still impressed we were able to design gameplay on such a large scale. I can't illustrate just how hard it is to make a sequence like that. I still can't believe we did it...

Favorite moment from another *GOW*?
The Kratos "clone" fight at the end of the first *God of War*. Simply amazing how they managed to combine excellent gameplay design and marry it into the narrative.

What's a key detail that players might have overlooked?
The fact that "hope" being the last power remaining in Pandora's Box actually followed the story in Greek mythology. I have run into a lot of fans that were unaware of that fact and thought we just added it into the script arbitrarily, but it was done very deliberately. The biggest reason I wanted hope to be the final power in the box is precisely because of the fact that it followed the historical account. I felt this point gave the game more weight, purpose, and credibility.

At Kratos' new restaurant, guests can choose the freshest scorpion tails right from the tank.

What new elements did your game bring to the series?
The biggest new addition had to be the Titans. Every time we did something like that in the past it was "smoke and mirrors." In *God of War III*, we wanted to "do it live," and the fact that we succeeded is no small feat. It's crazy to think that we actually increased the size and scale over the previous *God of War* games, but we did.

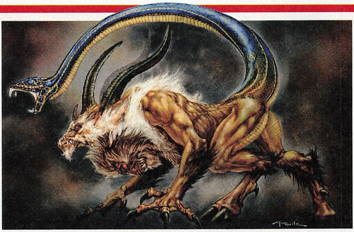
Biggest influences?
The previous *God of War* games. They were the standard for excellence. We always needed to look back at them and make sure we were staying consistent and doing them justice.

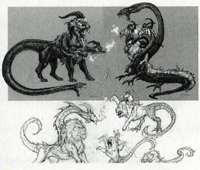
Art of War

Chimera

God of War III

One of the first bosses encountered in *God of War III*, the Chimera is described in Greek epic *The Iliad* as "a fearful creature who had three heads, one of a grim-eyed lion; in her hinderpart, a dragon; and in her middle, a goat, breathing forth a fearful blast of blazing fire."





The Classics
The final design sticks closely to the original Greek monster, thankfully ditching an earlier puppet idea that put the spare head on the ends of its arms.

God of War: Ghost of Sparta

PSP, 2010

Wedged into the gap between the first two PS2 games, *Sparta* begins with Kratos having recently ascended to the position of god of war. He's still haunted by visions, one of which spurs him to set off for Atlantis seeking to change his fate.

Dana Jan, Game Director

Favorite moment from your own game?

There are a lot of great moments in *Ghost of Sparta* so it's hard to pick just one. Without spoiling this particular part of the game, I will say that I'm very proud of a sequence we created where Kratos has to confront his past in a very harsh and over-the-top way. His subconscious actually attacks him physically and the player is going to experience a fight between Kratos and his guilt. If you know *God of War,* I don't have to tell you that this is a brutal sequence. Kratos has been tormented by visions and nightmares of his past throughout the *God of War* series. It's something that defines him. In our game, we took some of the moments that are traditionally shown through non-interactive movies and made them playable. I think players are going to talk about this one.

Favorite moment from another *GOW*?

I really like all of the fights with huge monsters for their epic sense of scale—Hydra, Cronos, Colossus, etc.—but after playing *God of War III,* the extremely personal and gruesome moment with Helios is on the top of my list. When you have to walk toward him and use the analog stick to position your hands to block his blinding light, I really felt like I was Kratos. As Kratos attempts to tear his head off, the camera angle, the sounds of the struggle, and disgusting rips forming in the neck... the presentation of this moment was excellent. There's this expression that comes over Kratos' face just before he separates Helios' head from his body that gives you a glimpse into his mindset. That crazed look stuck with me.

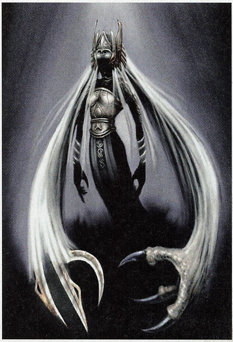
What's a key detail that players might have overlooked?

We brought back the gravedigger character from the first *God of War.* I don't want to spoil anything here, but he's pretty key to the entire series. Enough said.

What new elements did your game bring to the series?

The PSP games have been a great opportunity to explore additional sections of Kratos' personal story. In *Ghost of Sparta,* we've really gone off the deep end and we're bringing to light some very important aspects of Kratos and reasons behind what else might be driving his thirst for vengeance. From a genre perspective, I think this game in particular is going to define what third-person action-adventure games can be on a handheld system. We've always said that as a studio we don't look at the games we make as being "just" handheld games. We're going to deliver a *big* experience that you can put in your pocket!

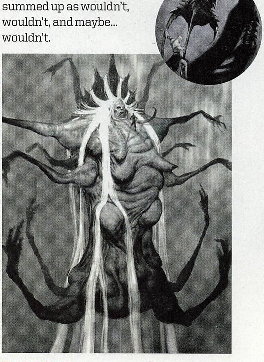
Art of War



Sisters of Fate

God of War II

These three characters are pivotal bosses in *God of War II.* They underwent numerous revisions, changing from combat-ready crones to shadowy creatures and sharp-toothed gargoyle-like hags. The final look settled on a mix of all three elements best summed up as wouldn't, wouldn't, and maybe... wouldn't.



△ Weight Watcher
The big-boned Clotho deviated the most from her more human sisters—graduating from a slug-like Jabba the Hutt creature to this towering lump of fat.

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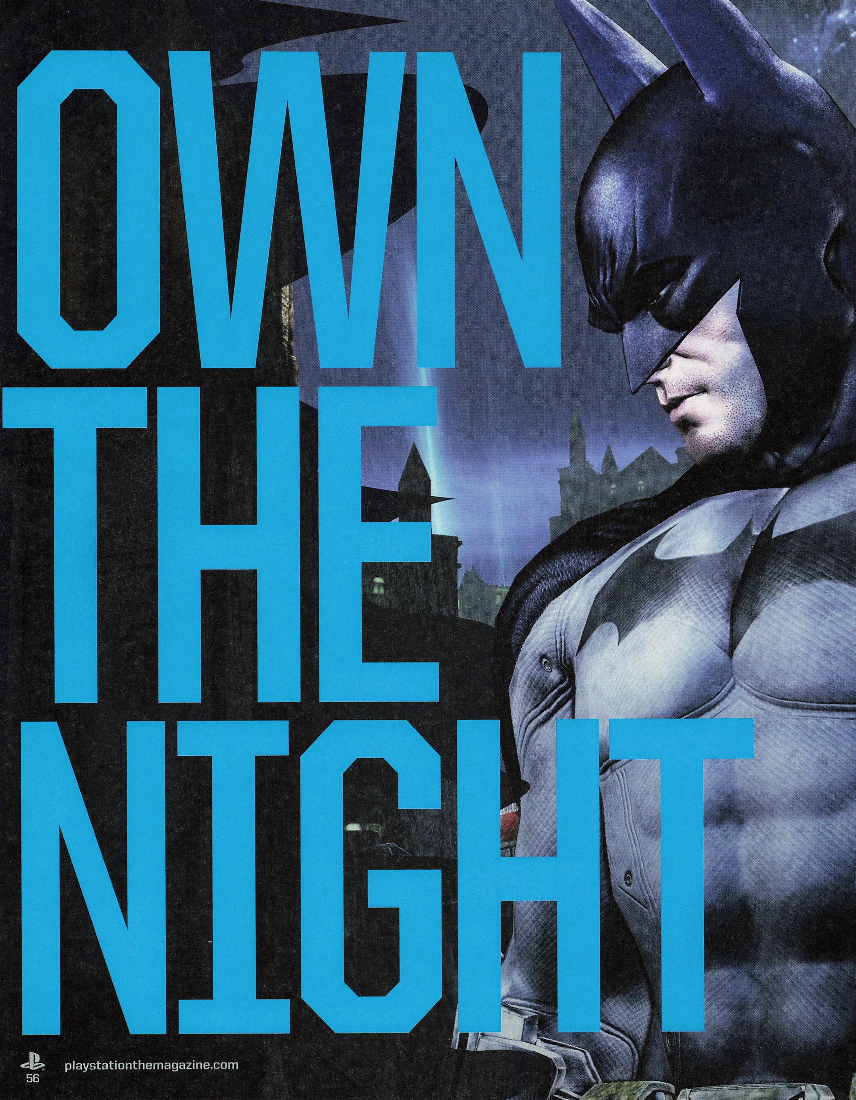


OWN THE NIGHT

WELCOME TO ARKHAM CITY. MILES OF FENCED-OFF GOTHAM WHERE THE INMATES RUN WILD AND MADNESS RULES THE STREETS. WELCOME TO HELL...

Developer Rocksteady's *Batman: Arkham Asylum* wasn't just good. It nailed being Batman perfectly, making sure players felt like the Dark Knight—swooping from shadows to clobber thugs, using gadgets to solve crimes, and looking *really good* in a cape. But getting something so right the first time can make sequels tricky. For *Batman: Arkham City,* Rocksteady has taken the sensible route—it's made everyone feel like Batman all over again, only more so. And this time, instead of a Gothic madhouse to explore, there's a massive chunk of Gotham City to patrol.

It's all thanks to ex-Arkham Asylum warden-turned-mayor Quincy Sharp. He's fenced off miles of Gotham, locked the lunatics in and thrown away the key. The only rule? Don't try to escape. Other than that, the most corrupt criminal minds ever known have been left to do whatever they want. But Sharp's up to something—something hinted at in the first game. For those who collected the Chronicles of Arkham messages, they revealed Sharp's schizophrenic alter ego, the spirit of Arkham, who believed the only way to treat the criminally insane was to kill them. Then there's the new warden of Arkham City: Hugo Strange, a mystery man with no history or past that Batman can trace.

Melting Pot

So, there's a madhouse five times the size of Arkham Asylum, set up by a closet lunatic and run by a man who seemingly doesn't exist. Gotham's protector Batman, understandably, will take

▸▸

HE'S BATMAN, STUPID! "Do you know who I am?" This is a fine example of a rhetorical question. Thugs know who he is.

PLASTIC MAN Harvey Dent's Two-Face is new to the city and wants to prove his power by offing Catwoman.

offense. As game director Sefton Hill explains, "He's been monitoring this place; he's worried. He thinks it's a time bomb waiting to explode into the streets of Gotham."

Batman has been patrolling Arkham City to keep an eye on the bad guys. When Rocksteady's demonstration begins, he's perched on the corner of a building and staring down at the streets below. It's an immediately impressive location; the move away from Arkham Asylum has lost the game none of its shadowy menace. The setting's a mix of Tim Burton's original *Batman* movie and a touch of *Escape From New York,* with abandoned buildings, splashes of neon, garbage, and rain. Where *Asylum* offered forboding spires and spooky graveyards, *City* has grimy alleys and filthy streets stretching into the distance.

Sightseeing

Hill is keen to point out that just being big isn't enough. "One key thing isn't size, [but] detail. We're not trying to make the biggest city; we're trying to make the most detailed and engrossing area. Every nook and cranny has a story." That sounds good considering one strength of the original was its extras—side quests such as the Riddler challenges—which never felt like tacked-on busywork.

But the fact remains: *City* is huge and Batman needs to get around. Questions about vehicles are deflected: "Something we'll cover at a later date." All Rocksteady is showing right now are Batman's basic abilities. He's obviously been praticing—jumping off the building sees him unfurl his cape and glide, while huge swathes of city unfold below. Hill says, "*Arkham City* is a much more diverse space than *Arkham Asylum.* [Batman] needs a whole new set of moves to get around effectively. We wanted to give the player the ability to glide down between streets and live that Batman experience."

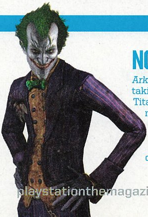
So that means a new gadget, the grapple boost, which pulls Batman up and launches him into the air. He also has a new dive allowing him to plummet before pulling into a high-speed ground-level flight. Combining the two means Batman can basically fly. Hill explains: "It's similar to combat. When you pick up and play it's easy but the more you do, the better you'll be able to move across the city without touching the ground. You'll learn how to move and then how to combo moves together."

Air Assault

It certainly looks simple, with Batman able to target and latch onto numerous surfaces to stay airborne. His point-to-point zip line has also been improved, enabling him to shoot out a second line while moving along the first and letting him change direction as he moves from wall to wall. There are plenty more changes too. "There's lots of new stuff for running across rooftops, blending in, running while grappling, sliding underneath objects, jumping between objects," Hill says. Basic moves have been upgraded too: "You can slide and smash through vents, slide straight into hanging off an edge. You can dive through windows and over railings as well."

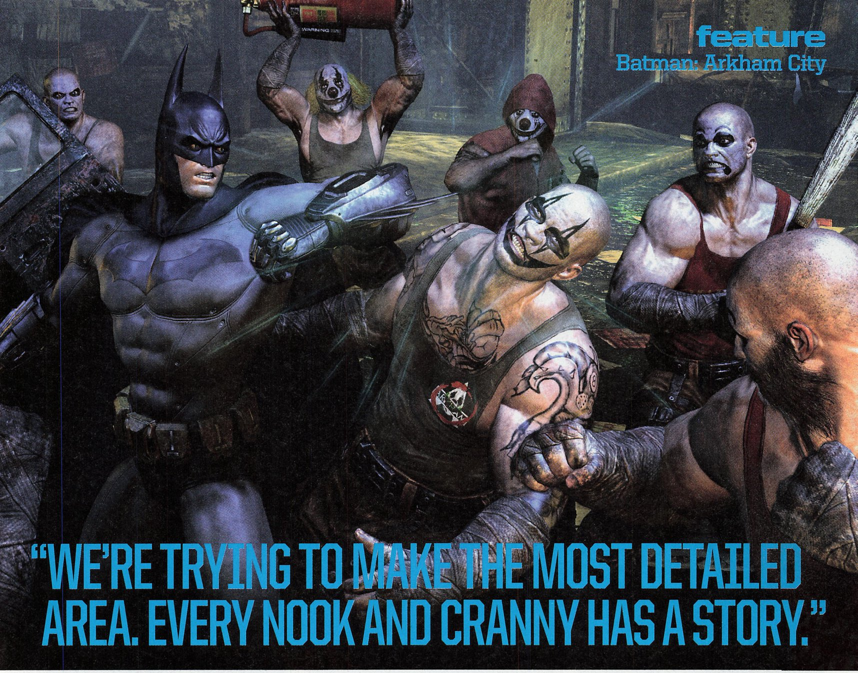
After the short flight, Batman comes to rest on a roof, watching thugs in the street below. A scan with detective mode reveals one of the goons is an informant for the Riddler. Interrogating him is easy; Batman drops into the group and flattens them, leaving him last for a chat. There'll be people throughout the city whom Batman can squeeze for info, although we've yet to see where it leads.

The street fight was only a warmup. Batman's real mission is to rescue Catwoman. She's been kidnapped by a new arrival to ▶▶



NO JOKE?

Arkham Asylum ended with the Joker taking the mutating monster-making Titan chemical, then fighting Batman while all hulked up on drugs. He lost and was last seen on a stretcher—back to normal once the effects had worn off. However, he's conspicuously absent in *Arkham City* thus far, only marking his presence as a voice over the radio. It seems the after-effects of the Titan binge might not be the reason, either. When pushed on why the Joker couldn't be seen, all director Sefton Hill would reveal was, "The Joker is sick. That's all I'm saying about that for the time being."



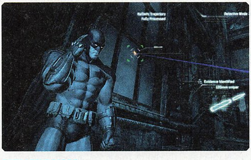
> “WE’RE TRYING TO MAKE THE MOST DETAILED AREA. EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY HAS A STORY.”

CATWOMAN

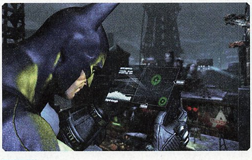
Batman’s girlfriend or enemy?

Selena Kyle is one of Batman’s oldest adversaries, originally appearing in the first solo Batman comic as the Cat. She’s always been an antihero rather than a true villain though—an athletic burglar with too much conscience to be truly evil. As such, she’s had an ongoing on/off romance with Batman and the two often work together. That seems to be the case in *Arkham City*. Batman rescues her from Two-Face before the deranged district attorney can kill her, saves her from a bullet, and then lets her go. It’s still not clear whose side she’s on, but we absolutely guarantee they’ll kiss.

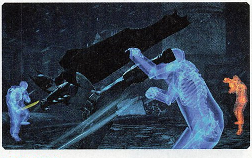
"THE DARK KNIGHT SMASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW TO SAFETY AS THE TOWER ERUPTS."



DETECTIVE MODE It will be more important in solving crimes this time.



TUNE IN The broadcast analyzer lets our hero hack transmissions to uncover information.



X-RAY SPECS Hidden goons and their weapons are revealed and it looks *so* cool.

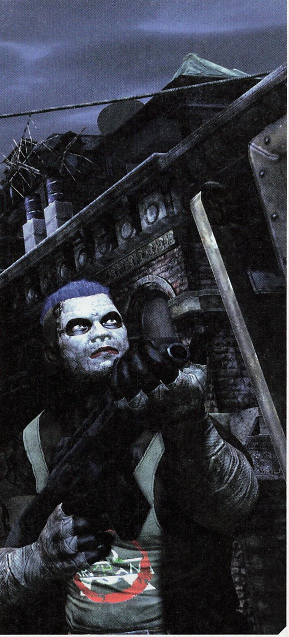
the city, Two-Face. He's fresh in town, so his plan: kill Catwoman to prove he's a player.

Face the Music

Batman's arrival at Two-Face's courthouse also shows off a few more new tricks, such as a grapple pulling him up to an edge and letting him roll unnoticed into a stealthy crouch. There's also a quick takedown to rapidly remove threats, such as a gunman overlooking the main courtroom. With the gunman gone, the Dark Knight is able to survey the room. It's full of bad guys watching Two-Face rant as Catwoman hangs over a bubbling vat. Scanning the scene may not be necessary; there are lots of people. The detective mode scanner goes crazy with the pings of detected villains rising to a buzz until it finally registers 40. Fortunately, Batman has a slight advantage because *he's Batman*.

"You'll have bigger fights," Hill points out. "That's something we're focusing on." But he also highlights what being Batman means: "He's a fearsome character, and some people run." This is demonstrated when Batman employs the zip-line launcher to attach a cable over the meeting, then uses a new wire-walking ability to move over the crowd and drop down.

Half the terrified goons immediately run, but it's still a large crowd and a good chance to show off upgraded combat. Basic fighting is still the same: mixing attacks, blocks, and evades to string together seamless combos. What's been added is a natural progression: projectile counters enabling Batman to catch and throw back objects; knife-wielding enemies launching flurries of blows, forcing the hero to dodge multiple slashes; and new



HARLEY QUINN

The Joker's sexy psychotic squeeze

Dr. Harleen Francis Quinzel was originally an Arkham Asylum psychologist who became obsessed with the Joker. Eventually she went crazy, fell in love with him, and became the squeaky-voiced villainess Harley Quinn. The Joker takes advantage of her affection and devotion, showing just enough attention to keep her interested and using her to help with his various schemes. With Rocksteady hinting that the Joker is sick and somehow incapacitated (he's only appeared in the teaser trailer so far, attached to a drip), chances are we'll be seeing much more of Quinn in *Arkham City*.

aerial attacks letting Batman launch himself off people or walls. There are also beatdowns unleashing a Jackie Chan-like flurry of punches against single opponents, which are crucial against armored enemies. Batman can even backflip and spray explosive gel on the floor, detonating it to stun attackers.

So despite the odds, the fight is horribly mismatched. One by one, Two-Face's audience falls. Two-Face, as it turns out, is all talk and is soon strung up over his own acid bath. This is where it gets interesting... Catwoman's motivations aren't obvious and it's hard to tell whether she's there to help or following her own agenda. As Catwoman uses her whip to grapple to Batman's zip line and wire-walk away, a question forms: Both characters' move sets look suspiciously similar. Is there a chance she's going to be a playable or a co-op character? "I'm not allowed to comment on that," Hill says.

Bundle of Laughs

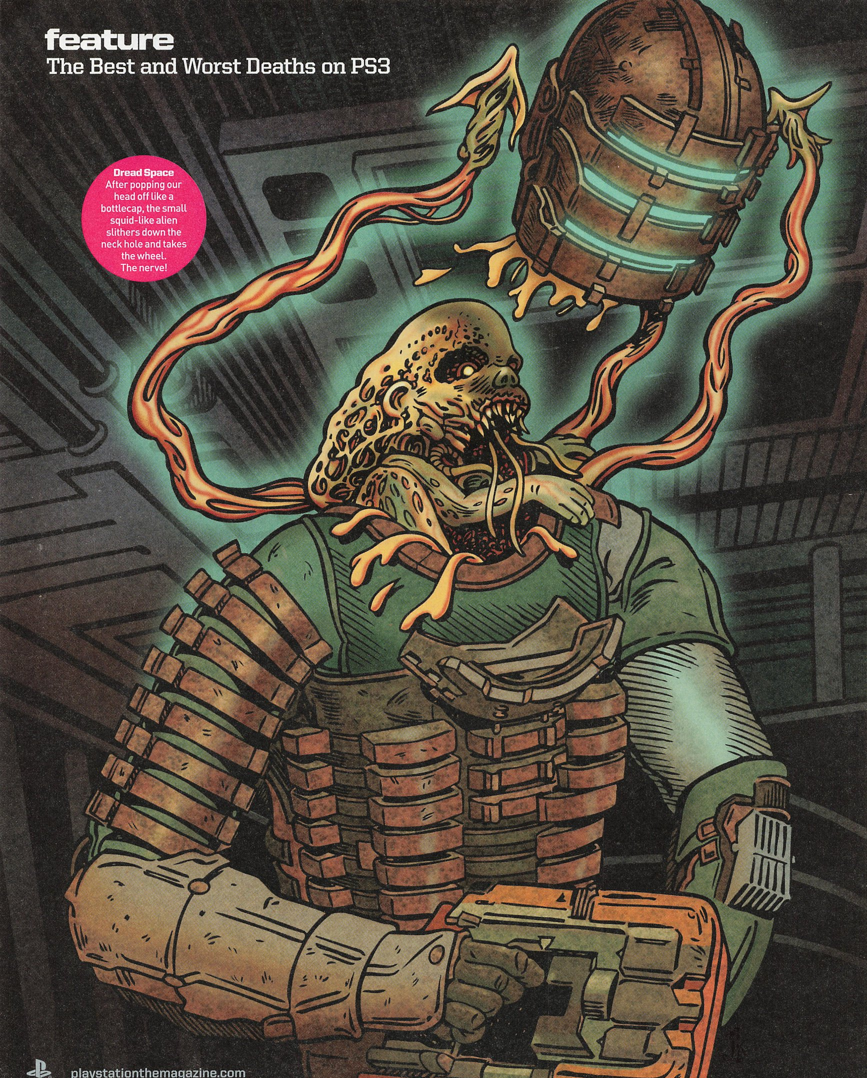
With Catwoman gone, Batman tries to track down the yet to be seen Joker using detective mode. "Forensics is something we want to push for the sequel," Hill says. In this instance, it means using two bullet holes—one in the window and one in the floor—to chart a trajectory. "We also have you solving crimes with multiple bits of evidence," Hill adds. "The side stories are great for that. We have puzzles that are perhaps a bit harder than we could have on the main path."

We get a taste of one side story as Batman attempts to track down Joker. He encounters a group standing around a ringing phone and discussing a myth that whoever answers it will be dead by morning. Batman drops in to investigate, causing the crowd to scatter, and picks up to find serial killer Zsasz on the line: Answering the phone activates his side mission. It's a big change according to Hill. "[In] the first game you had a main path; here there are side stories totally off the main track. We don't force you to do those. It's your choice."

For the time being, however, we're focused on the central path leading to a church tower sniper's nest that could house the Joker. Instead, we meet up with another old friend inside: Harley Quinn. She's got a new look, but she's just as insane and leaves us to deal with a bunch of machine gun-wielding toughs. They spend so much time discussing Batman's ability to beat them up that he has plenty of time to use a smoke pellet to escape into the shadows. Now we're in familiar *Asylum* territory: a room full of scared bad guys to hunt from above, swinging between points, and dropping down to eliminate one man at a time. There's a new takedown where Batman hangs over an edge to throttle a thug with his legs, as well as "weak walls"—wooden panels Batman can punch through to reach enemies.

With Harley's gang neutralized, it's time to continue the search for the Joker. At the top of the tower is a remote-controlled sniper rifle and a lot of explosives. Batman has seconds to trace the Joker using his new broadcast analyzer before the timers start ticking. The demonstration ends in perfect Batman style as the Dark Knight smashes through the window, swooping to safety as the tower erupts behind him.

It's a fine showing for the sequel to one of last year's greatest games and encouraging that it's already in playable form. Criminals should be very afraid—in 2011, that is.



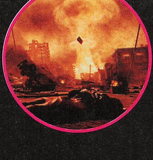
Dread Space
After popping our head off like a bottlecap, the small squid-like alien slithers down the neck hole and takes the wheel. The nerve!

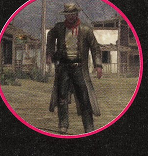
DYING VICARIOUSLY

The Best and Worst DEATHS ON PS3

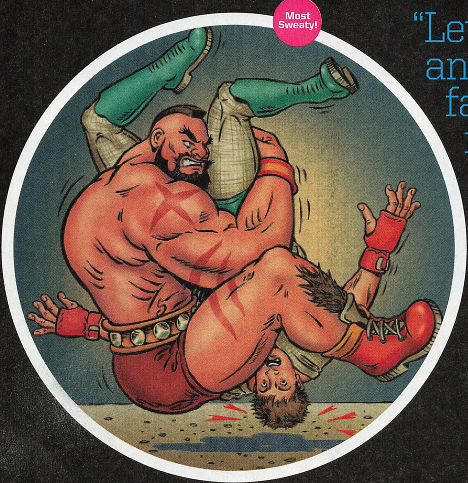
By Andrew Groen
Illustrations by John Kachik

Everybody dies. It's inevitable. But while most of us hope to meet our end at a ripe old age in a comfy bed surrounded by loved ones, our feelings are the exact opposite when it comes to gaming. Put a DualShock in our hands, and we'd much rather go out in a blaze of glory (or, perhaps, glorious painful suffering). Dying can be one of the most fun things we experience in a videogame; from the poetic to the downright masochistic, these are some of the very best deaths that PS3 has to offer. We won't go gentle, either.





The Best and Worst Deaths on PS3


Most Sweaty!

> "Let your guard down and you'll be headed face first into this rough, scratchy, sweaty, bloody mat of thick Russian tundra fur." Super Street Fighter IV

Between Zangief's Thighs

Super Street Fighter IV

Pub: **Capcom** Dev: **Dimps/Capcom**

Due to *Super Street Fighter IV's* abstract art style, we had to use a bit of imagination here. We took a moment to ponder what it's really like in there after three long rounds, then we let our guard down and headed face first into this rough, scratchy, sweaty, bloody mat of thick Russian tundra fur. Once in there it was only a matter of seconds until the lights went out, but those were the worst seconds of our virtual life.

Natural Causes

Metal Gear Solid 4

Pub: **Konami** Dev: **Kojima Productions**

Most Poetic!

Sometimes peace is the bravest option. Faced with the terrible oncoming threat of his FOXDIE virus morphing into an airborne epidemic, Solid Snake decides upon completing his final mission that suicide is his only option. But at the last moment, he chooses to seclude himself instead and live his final few months sequestered and in peace. For a man who was born to know only war, Snake defies his fate and chooses to die peacefully from "old age."

Head Ripped Out With Spine Attached

Aliens vs. Predator

Pub: **Sega** Dev: **Rebellion**

Predators never give us much warning when they're about to kill us. (Which, perhaps, is why they're called "Predators.") In this case it's a moment of shock, a tug of pressure, and a spray of blood before our head is completely severed. But it wasn't so much the sight of having our spine ripped out that left us so severely traumatized, it was the knowledge that it would later be mounted like a set of trophy-winning antlers on the Predator's wall back home.

Thrown off Mount Olympus

God of War III

Pub: **SCEA** Dev: **Santa Monica Studio**

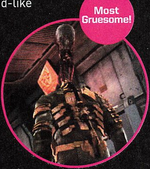
Most Oedipal!

As *God of War III* opens, we're scaling Mount Olympus on the back of the titan Gaia while fighting off the attacks of the sea god Poseidon (whose neck we eventually snap like a twig). After reaching the summit, we suffer a blast from Zeus' powerful lightning bolt and plummet into the underworld. We then affirm Kratos' position as PS3's most badass antihero by punching our way back from death.

Beheaded Then Reheaded

Dead Space

Pub: **Electronic Arts** Dev: **Visceral Games**



It begins when small squid-like creatures climb over our bloodied wounded body until they get a firm grasp on our neck. A powerful squeeze and a moment later our head pops off like a bottlecap. *Now* the creature sets its master plan in motion. It slithers down the innards of our newly exposed neck and attaches its tentacles to the spinal cord. Finally it maneuvers its head in place of our former one, taking full control of our now-dead body.

Eaten By Dinosaurs

Turok

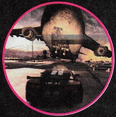
Pub: **Touchstone Games**
Dev: **Propaganda Games**

The key to enjoying this game was forcing ourselves to forget every nonsensical bit of plot that led up to the point of our dinosaur encounter. Space marines land on a random planet filled with Earth dinosaurs!? What's important is we're being swallowed whole by an enormous tyrannosaur. The dinosaurs went extinct long before hominids ever got the chance to be gloriously masticated in their toothy jaws, so we're taking full advantage of this opportunity in their stead.

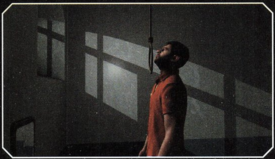
Squashed by Crashing Airplane

Split/Second

Pub: **Disney Interactive Studios**
Dev: **Black Rock Studio**



We thought we were hot stuff when we first hit the streets in *Split/Second.* We were nailing sweet drifts and dodging massive explosions, but nothing could have prepared us for having a jumbo jet dropped onto the tarmac right in front of our expensive yet oh-so-fragile sports car. Other deaths on this list are more graphic or bone chilling, but nothing can top this death in terms of sheer Jerry Bruckheimer-styled excitement.



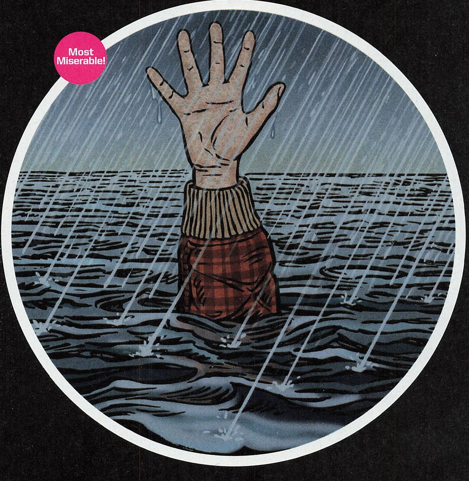
> "It's no secret that Ethan's chances of survival aren't good." Heavy Rain

Failing Our Son

Heavy Rain

Pub: **SCEA** Dev: **Quantic Dream**

No videogame weapon is more powerful than Ethan Mars' misery—a mighty tool used to get us to sob like babies. It's no secret to anyone who's played *Heavy Rain* that Mars' chances of survival aren't great. There are a number of different ways he can die and in just about every one he perishes sad and alone, having failed to save his only remaining son from slowly drowning.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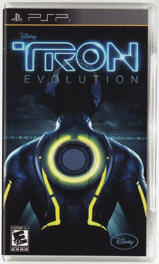
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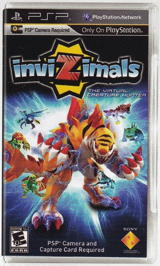
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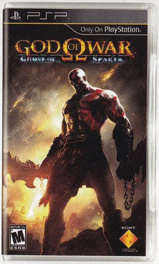
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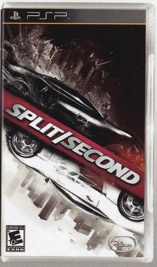
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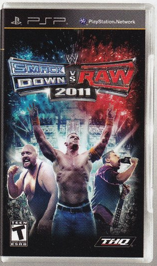
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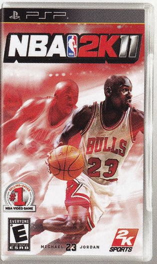
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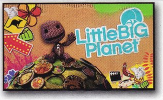
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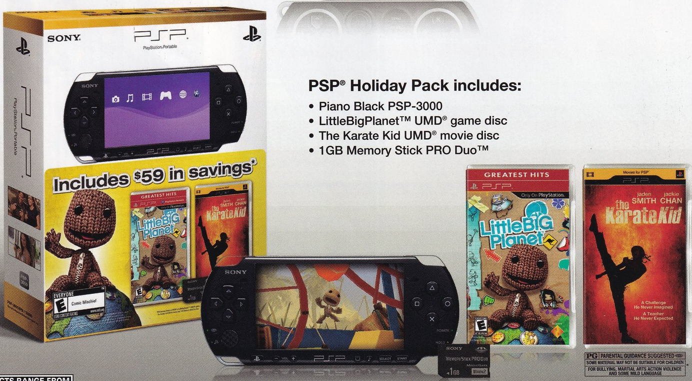
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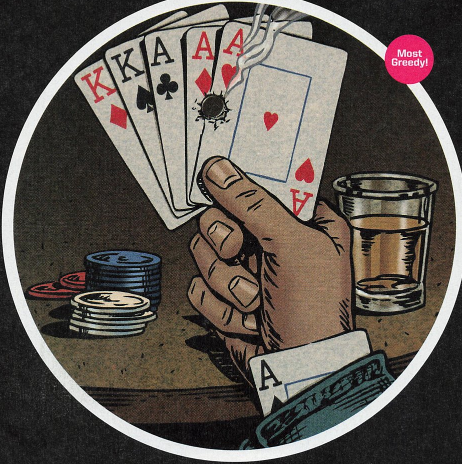

Most Greedy!

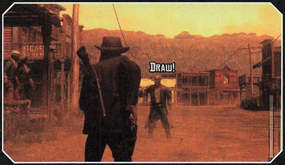
> "It only takes one lucky bullet to end it all." Red Dead Redemption

Caught Cheating at Poker

Red Dead Redemption

Pub: **Rockstar Games** Dev: **Rockstar San Diego/North**

In *Red Dead Redemption* we spent a great deal of time embroiled in gunfights and quests for revenge, but it's our greed that ultimately got us killed. With one lapse of concentration our opponents caught us pulling cards from the bottom of the deck and a moment later the duel was on. It wasn't the first time. We won 99 out of 100 of these duels, but it only took one (un)lucky bullet to end it all.



With 60,000 Souls

Demon's Souls

Pub: **Atlus** Dev: **From Software**

In substance, no single death in *Demon's Souls* is more spectacular than any other. The game uses its oppressive difficulty to consistently rip our heart out so we can see its frailty before we die. One mistake at the wrong time can result in the complete loss of hours of accrued souls (used as both experience points and currency), causing us to dial the suicide help line more than once.

Shot In the Face By the Joker

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe

Pub: **Midway Games**
Dev: **Midway/Warner Bros.**

Most Komedic!

The Joker's fatality in *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* is one of the most memorable in the series' history. After a quick practical joke in which his fake pistol fires only a "Bang!" sign, the Joker draws a real gun and fires straight into his opponent's face. Getting shot in the face usually sucks, but it's a gruesome honor at the Joker's hand.

10,000-Foot Swan Dive

Just Cause 2

Pub: **Square Enix** Dev: **Avalanche/Eidos**

Slipping away quietly in a hospital bed may work just fine for a lot of people, but we'd rather be on the tropical island of Panau and leaping head first out of a moving fighter jet without even the slightest pretense of opening a parachute. What better way to die than to take in a gorgeous bird's eye view of the world while experiencing the most exhilarating activity the planet Earth can provide. Is that one or two items to check off our Bucket list?

Mauled By a Bear

Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2010

Pub: **Activision** Dev: **Activision**

Whoever said man is the most dangerous prey obviously never tried bringing down a North American Kodiak bear. Man may have a sharp wit, but those bears have four-inch-long claws attached to 1,600 pounds (read: approximately one Volkswagen Beetle) of bear muscle. Wandering the wilderness, we happened across mama bear and were told we had no choice but to take her down. This was a huge mistake. We tried to shoot her before she fed us to her cubs, but that only made her angrier.

Becoming Sander Cohen's Art in Fort Frolic

BioShock

Pub: **2K Games** Dev: **Irrational Games**

Most Artistic!

We thought we were different than the average Splicer, but not as far as Sander Cohen was concerned. Statues of Splicers are everywhere all throughout Fort Frolic as examples of Cohen's "art," but we soon discovered that these aren't exactly what they seem. Rather, they're the posed plaster-coated corpses of dead denizens. After we died in his lair, we're pretty certain we enjoyed the honor of being featured as part of his tacky artistic "statement."

Smashed By Super Mutant Behemoth

Fallout 3

Pub: **Bethesda** Dev: **Bethesda Game Studios**

As we struggled to get our Fat Man mini-nuke launcher ready in time to defend ourselves, this hideous beast kept lumbering closer, wielding a fire hydrant at the end of six feet of still-attached sewer pipe as a brutal and effective mace. Only two options remained: Nuke both of us together or end up with our head smashed inside our chest cavity. We hesitated for a moment and the behemoth made the choice for us.

> "Our heart stopped when we saw a mushroom cloud looming behind us and a shockwave of debris chasing us down." Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Nuclear Bomb

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Pub: **Activision** Dev: **Infinity Ward**

We weren't concerned that this nuke could actually be set off. Nukes never go off in games. They're just an excuse to play tense music and make us run to the chopper—all the more reason why our heart stopped when we saw a mushroom cloud looming and a shockwave of debris about to overwhelm us. But what really blew us away was the next scene in which we slowly stumble through the nuclear aftermath before falling down and dying.

Most Explosive!

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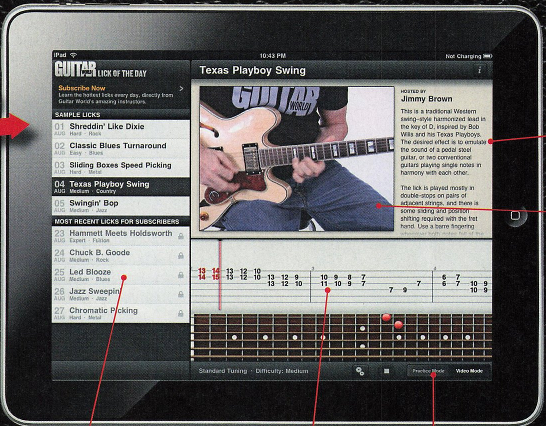
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Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing-style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

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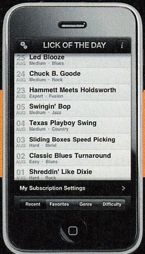

- 25 AUG Led Blooze — Medium · Blues
- 24 AUG Chuck B. Goode — Medium · Rock
- 23 AUG Hammett Meets Holdsworth — Expert · Fusion
- 05 AUG Swingin' Bop — Medium · Jazz
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CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

The classic Japanese horror platformer goes western and gets a whole new outlook on life. Jake and the Fat Man here recommend reading—and enjoying—the review. Or else!

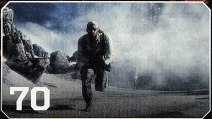
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

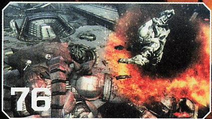
This may well be a month for controversy. Capcom's *Dead Rising 2* challenges our notion of what it means to be human: In a game where there are zombies everywhere, it's people who represent the darkest and blackest threat. *Castlevania,* once a classic Japanese franchise, has been reworked and remade by westerners who've plainly stated the series needed a new direction. And, with all guns locked and loaded, Electronic Arts brings war-torn Afghanistan to the fore in *Medal of Honor.* One can only wonder if current affairs should be made fodder for a first-person shooter with American troops still fighting there. Or if it's offensive to allow people to play insurgent forces in *Honor's* multiplayer mode.

At their best, games should challenge our notions of, well, everything. When we play, we should be entertained, but it's not so bad if we're also made to think, too—and not just about whether the M-16 or the AK-47 is the best gun for shooting folks in the face. So bring on the controversy. We at PTOM welcome it, just as we welcome everyone to read our reviews and, yes, to think about stuff.



MEDAL OF HONOR

America's ongoing war against terror comes to the PlayStation 3. Is it too soon to tackle Afghanistan, we wonder?



VANQUISH

The clothes make the man, especially when they allow for gratuitous ass-kicking in a high-tech world.

Melissa
Target
Zenith
78

VALKYRIA CHRONICLES II

Yappy kids and their tanks! Get off our lawns, you damn yappy kids! And take that turn-based warfare with you!

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet still possessed of minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

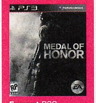
Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.

Afghanistan's mountainous terrain plays host to modern combat.

Medal of Honor

Neither above nor beyond the call of duty

Info



Format PS3
Pub Electronic Arts
Dev EA LA/DICE
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like An action-filled redeployment back to familiar frontlines.

There's a moment in Sylvester Stallone's action-hero overload *The Expendables* where Jet Li kicks a man to his knees and snaps his spine with a swift heel to the forehead. It's outrageously violent, and thus, totally awesome. And yet this moment stands out because there weren't *enough* over-the-top testosterone-fueled scenes like that, leaving us slightly unfulfilled by this otherwise enjoyable film.

That's effectively how we feel about *Medal of Honor*, a modern-day military shooter that's well executed, but lacks the creativity needed to rise above the rest of the overcrowded genre and become the experience it clearly aimed to be. But the nice thing about a game falling short of greatness? It's still very, very good.

The core gameplay is a perfect example of stop-and-pop shooting done right: a steady onslaught of intense cover-based firefights complemented by a suite of extremely solid mechanics. Movement and aiming feel natural, gritty sound effects and subtle blood spatter make for satisfying gunplay, and the usual assortment of real-world firearms kept us entertained. All this counts for a lot when the entire point of the game is to shoot stuff.

A Salty Salute

Unfortunately, the single-player campaign never gave us enough to do with all its slick mechanics. We spent too much time cowering behind cover slowly picking off insurgents until our squad leader—whose constant guidance saved us from ever having to think—told us to continue to the next area where the cycle simply repeated. Granted, this is pretty standard for a first-person shooter, but we longed for more inventive scenarios to savor as we played. Many missions were so linear that it killed the immersion; the game sometimes felt like an endless series of unexpected enemy camps,

Five Details Why we love Medal of Honor's multiplayer

1 **Use it, don't lose it** Earned tactical strike actions don't disappear until they're used. Even if we die.

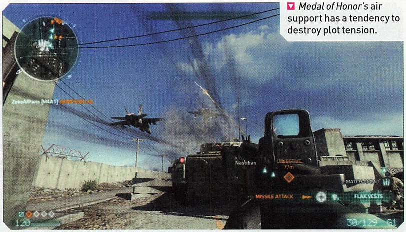
2 **No re-reloads** Clicking the sprint button while reloading doesn't cancel the reload. Bullets are better than a head start.

3 **Fast blasts** Grenades blow up quickly. It's inconvenient, but it should prevent random grenade spam.

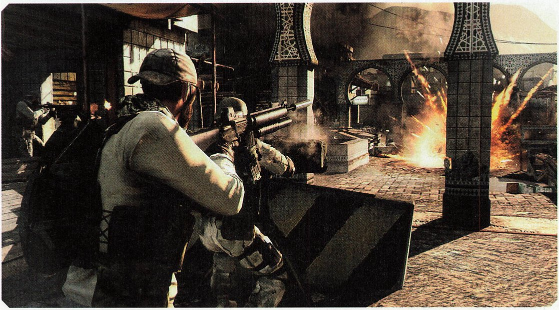
4 **In the camp sites** Players entering another team's spawn site are auto-killed after a brief warning. So long spawn campers!

5 **Shot trajectory** Bullets drop when fired over long distances, adding a touch of realism and making life trickier for camping snipers.

The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and the United States invaded in 2001. This country and its citizens have seen a lot of war.



Medal of Honor's air support has a tendency to destroy plot tension.



Fun Fact: Helicopters first saw wartime use (albeit limited) during World War II.

predictably bad intel, and airborne deus ex machinas.

The story (what little story there is) doesn't help much. The game doesn't adopt a plot until near the very end. Mainly the story just bounces among three voiceless soldiers as they engage in a series of missions that, in some vague way, contribute to our overall efforts in Afghanistan. Apparently two of the three men are highly trained Tier 1 operators, but the game never bothered to tell us or to explain what a Tier 1 operator *is*. This lack of context robbed the story of any weight and the action of any tension. It's difficult for the stakes to be high when we don't even know what they are.

Honorable Discharge

Perhaps the game's greatest shortcoming is its brevity—the campaign contains just 10 missions and clocks in at around six hours. Then again, that got us into *Medal of Honor's* excellent multiplayer, which (unlike the solo missions) we can envision ourselves playing for a very long time.

In general, it feels like a tighter, more focused version of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2's* multiplayer with fewer crazy perks, bonuses, and customization options. We still earn experience and gradually level up and unlock new gear. We can also earn tactical strike actions such as missile strikes or radar jamming by gaining enough experience points without dying (effectively *Warfare 2's* killstreak rewards except based entirely on experience, not just kills), which can help shift the momentum of a match and keep the action balanced.

We not only loved this simpler, more skill-based approach, but also the brilliant maps—which provided a healthy mix of close-quarters areas and bigger open spaces and never forced the action into unfair bottlenecks. Also noteworthy: the super fun weaponry. Finding a gun that suits our playstyle can make the difference in a multiplayer game and we had no problem securing several firearms to fall in love with. Most importantly, unlike *Warfare 2,* we seldom died without knowing who killed us because we had enough health to turn and defend ourselves. That alone alleviated much frustration and made for a more enjoyable experience.

So yes, *Honor's* Campaign mode is more middle of the road than we'd like. But think of the game's solo experience as basic training: a necessary and sometimes amusing diversion before jumping into the real battles taking place online.

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
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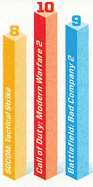
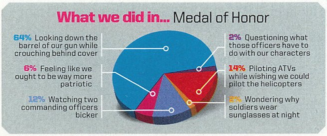
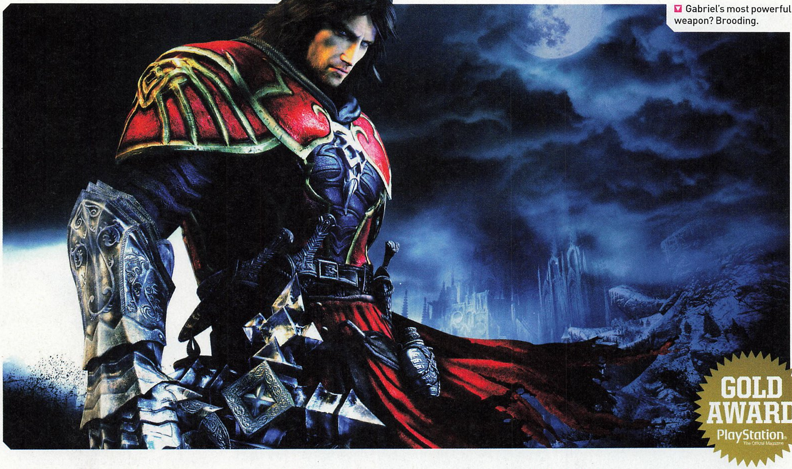
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



ScorePole
Call of Duty dominates the battlefield, but *SOCOM* is preparing its counterstrike.

What we did in... Medal of Honor





Gabriel's most powerful weapon? Brooding.

GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

Castlevania Lords of Shadow

Gothic horror gets an insane reboot

Forget everything about *Castlevania*—it doesn't apply here. Not only is *Lords of Shadow* a reboot of the long-running series' centuries-spanning plot, but it also doesn't exactly *feel* like any other *Castlevania* either. That's not a criticism; rather it's an acknowledgment that the game's look, tone, music, and pacing have little connection to previous games in the series. Longtime fans may grumble, but anyone who gives *Shadow* a chance will see it's a fantastic game in its own right.

It's also a fantastically *long* game (at least by action-adventure standards) clocking in at around 16 to 20 hours, the latter half of which can get brutally difficult. It covers a lot of ground in that time too, boasting 46 distinct stages running the gamut from lush forests and dilapidated ruins to vampire-infested castles and the obligatory huge clock tower. Each of these is beautifully realized and—naturally—filled with an increasingly deadly assortment of monsters, traps, puzzles, and hidden paths.

Lord of War

Shadow centers around Gabriel Belmont—a knight in a brotherhood of holy warriors dedicated to fighting monsters. The death of his wife Marie at the hands of the Lords of Shadow—three mysterious demonic masterminds—prompts him to track the deadly trio to their lairs, all in the hope he can resurrect Marie and save the world from ruin. It's hardly the traditional crusade against Dracula, but it's a riveting well-told story with superb acting, beautiful art direction, and high production values.

It's also an excuse for Belmont to kill thousands of supernatural beasts. It's tempting to call *Shadow* a *God of War* clone and there are undeniable similarities—such as the fixed camera angles and the way Belmont's chain-whip Combat Cross arcs during the buttonmashy combo-driven

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Konami **Dev** Mercury Steam/Kojima Productions **Price** $59.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** A faster, tougher, longer *God of War*.

Influences What's lurking behind the Shadow?

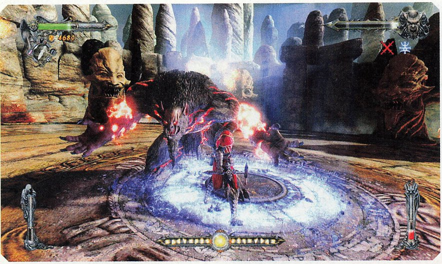
Shadow of the Colossus' fights

Legacy of Kain's chattiness

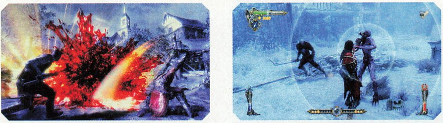
Indiana Jones' versatile whip

Metal Gear Solid's twists

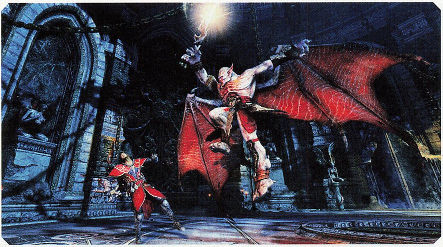
God of War's everything else



▲ ProTip: Do not invite monsters to lunch as they hog all the chips and salsa.



▼ *Lords of Shadow* is the first *Castlevania* game made by western developers.



combat. But whereas *War* stresses brute strength, *Shadow* emphasizes speed; blocking, dodging, and jumping with hair-trigger reflexes is vital to Gabriel's survival. This also means there's a steep learning curve, as these reflexes are tough to cultivate amid the initially awkward block-and-dodge controls.

There's also a lot more platforming, climbing, open exploration, and shimmying across ledges than in *God of War*. The Combat Cross is a versatile tool, able to swing Gabriel across chasms or yank him over obstacles, and it only becomes more useful—and fun to use—as upgrades are unlocked for it over the course of the game.

Aside from a couple of infuriatingly obtuse puzzles and perhaps the game's overall difficulty level, there isn't much to complain about here. The action is satisfyingly vicious, the boss battles—particularly the three influenced by *Shadow of the Colossus*—are breathtaking, and every level is packed with hidden areas and alternate paths to revisit. And the ending—complete with an unexpected post-credits twist—left us curious for the sequel. For now though, this is more than enough. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

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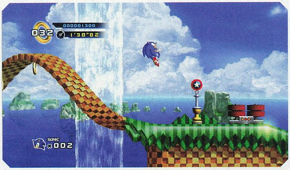
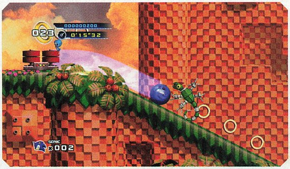


▲ Sonic takes flight, but will soon discover gravity.



Sonic the Hedgehog 4 Episode 1

Something old, new, and blue

Info

Format PSN
Pub Sega
Dev Sonic Team
Price $14.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like Our Sega Genesis console got reincarnated.

The gaming world was once split into two camps: Sonic or Mario. While we respect Mario's legacy, as original-issue Sonic campers we attribute the plumber's continued success to Mob ties. The interim decades haven't been as kind to our favorite blue bomber, but *Sonic 4* resuscitates his career.

Episode 1 draws heavily on Sonic's 2D side-scrolling glory with four levels, each comprising three acts and a showdown with Dr. Eggman. Some might bemoan the rehashing of the past as unoriginal, but there's no denying the execution when it comes to playability—these new levels rank with Sonic's best. The tweaked control scheme seemed to lack the crispness we recalled on the Genesis, but the addition of a homing attack is the most debatable change. Initially, it seemed to undermine the challenge, but we found it led to new timing and platforming trials later in the game.

Playing *Episode 1* felt like hanging out with an old friend who still has his all his best moves and looks better than ever. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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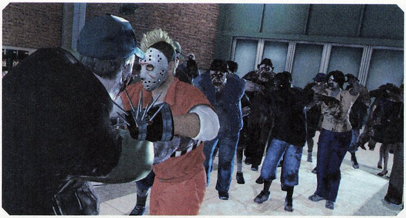
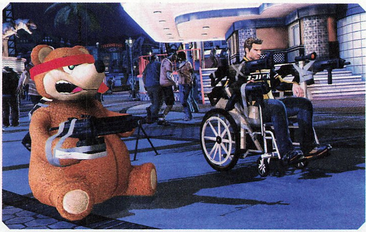
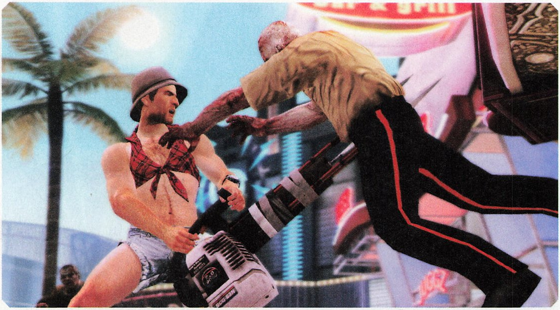


▲ Chuck Greene is a master of disaster. Oh, and he can make himself a lightsaber out of gems and a flashlight, which makes him better than all of us combined.





Dead Rising 2

"No king on his throne has the joy of the dead"

Info

PS3
DEADRISING 2
CAPCOM

Format PS3
Pub Capcom
Dev Blue Castle Games
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like The blackest Black Friday ever.

To steal liberally from cartoonist Walt Kelly, *we have met the enemy and he is us. Dead Rising 2* offers an unceasing zombie horde, but its true evil emerges from its humans.

The third-person adventure hammers this message home at all points and with the subtlety of a cannon blast. Two magicians in Fortune City's undead wasteland practice their craft with malicious glee, slicing a woman in half and leaving protagonist Chuck Greene to stare at the blood-soaked horror while incredulously noting this is no illusion. Elsewhere, in a still under construction portion of Fortune City's mall, a crazed lawman exercises his *authoritah* by hanging victims from a series of rafters. When Greene arrives, the man nudges a frightened prisoner off the planks to his death.

Rising 2 revels in gore and never averts its gaze. The game dispatches its innocent victims and psychopaths alike with *schadenfreude*, dropping them into cookers, or running them across buzz saws. Mean-spirited finds a home in Fortune City; especially when, say, the dying magicians, upon their ignominious defeat by Greene, live out a creepy sort-of love scene where one crawls over to the other, gently cradles his partner's head, and then stabs the man repeatedly.

In stark contrast to its message and the overt worship of violence, *Rising 2* offers a wondrous world choked with the rotting dead. Its doomsday scenario is delicious; Greene has 72 game-simulated hours to clear his now-maligned name, rescue survivors trapped in a retail-casino complex, punish evil, and ensure his daughter gets her much-needed medicine. The clock looms over Greene; there's always something to do and this ever-present sense of urgency serves as the game's great draw—a hook strong enough to pull (yank, really) players along from beginning to end.

This time around, escort missions requiring the hero to schlep survivors to a safe room are not the videogame equivalent of a salt bath after 500 paper cuts; rescued humans possess the modicum of artificial intelligence to survive without constant supervision. They're still stupid and annoying, they'll want to chat and possibly have their foolish demands met before they join Greene, but at least they're not insta-zombie chow.

A new inventing mechanic allows Greene to combine two items into one tool or weapon. It's a nifty gimmick and works well because our man, at least initially, is a pushover. With limited health and speed until he levels up, he's an easy target; giving him access to decent weaponry early on helps.

Developer Blue Castle has done a solid job taking over from Capcom Japan, maker of the original *Rising*. Yet the Castle begins to crumble under the weight of egregious load times and the game's wholly overdone worship of the blood spray. When the dead rise, none of this works out as a superb bargain.

GREG ORLANDO

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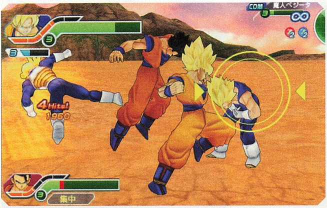
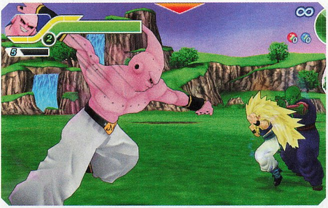


The *Dragon Ball Z* family reunion during four player ad hoc battles can get extremely confusing at times.



Dragon Ball Z Tenkaichi Tag Team

Four-play to keep things fresh

Info

Format PSP **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Spike **Price** $39.99 **ESRB** Teen **It's like** A *Kamehameha* in our pocket.

There will always be an audience for the extreme fighting of Goku, Vegeta, and the rest of the *Dragon Ball Z* crew. In *Tenkaichi Tag Team,* the combos are fast and loose, the finishing moves are huge, and the 70-character-deep roster includes nearly everyone from Gotenks to Dr. Gero. The graphics emulate the anime roots well, as do the wide open spaces that combat takes place in—even if most arenas lack interesting details.

The new 2-on-2 multiplayer is welcome (although it requires three friends, each with a PSP and a game) and the campaign is great for fans who want a trip through the entire *Dragon Ball Z* history. And other little extras, like the classic fights recreated in Battle 100 mode, might keep players coming back.

Don't expect anything too fresh here; the game merely offers more of the well-worn qualities of *Dragon Ball* brawlers from the past decade. Then again, *Tenkaichi* is the first *DBZ* PSP game since the god-awful *Dragonball Evolution,* so anything would be a marked improvement. For longtime fans, though, there's just enough here to satisfy.

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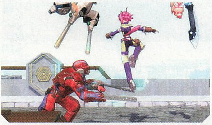
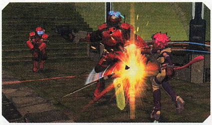
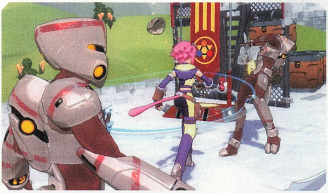
HENRY GILBERT







Blade Kitten

Slower, Pussycat! Meander! Meander!

Ever have one of those dreams that begin with a simple objective that then grows increasingly distant as other seemingly unrelated tasks keep cropping up? Playing through *Blade Kitten*—or rather, the first episode of *Blade Kitten*—can feel like that. A 2.5D sidescroller starring a pink-haired cat girl named Kit Ballard, *Kitten* begins as a straightforward bounty hunt but quickly goes off the rails when a rival hunter steals Kit's bounty key and blows up her ship.

From there, Kit has to cut down mercenaries and "ghost" robots, offer help to a local sheriff, and fight a crab-like colossus for reasons that aren't always clear and sometimes even seem to run counter to her goals. But all that really needs to be understood is that Kit can easily hack through foes with her floating sword, rapidly climb nearly any surface, and needs to collect bits of cash scattered around each of the surprisingly huge hazard-filled stages. Occasionally, she'll even get to ride a two-legged lizard-thing that smashes boulders with its head.

It's all fun enough for the half-dozen hours that *Kitten* lasts, but not so fun we'd want to go back and hunt for the assorted treasures hidden throughout each maze-like level. *Kitten* has a few interesting touches, but its action simultaneously feels slow *and* weightless and its cutscenes are more about Kit being sassy than advancing the story.

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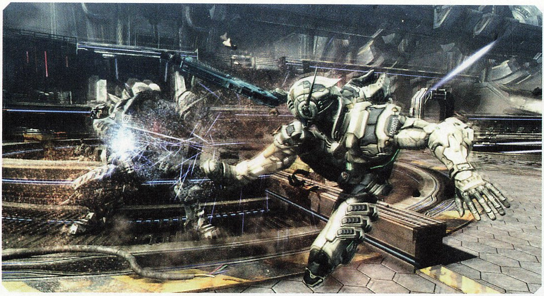
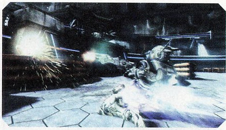
MIKEL REPARAZ

Info

Format PSN
Pub Atari
Dev Krome Studios
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like A slower *Strider* with bigger levels and tougher enemies.





The ARS allows Gideon to access powers such as super-speed and slo-mo targeting.

Vanquish

By which it is meant shoot in face

Cast List

WHAM

Sam Gideon
The only thing deadlier than his ARS is his second-hand smoke.

BAM

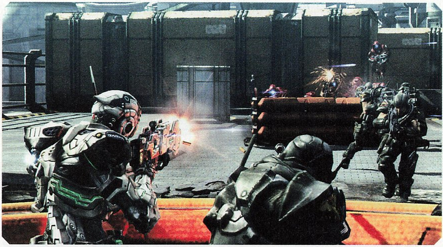
Lt. Col. Burns
The grizzled Marine veteran puts duty before sentiment.

THANK YOU MA'AM

Elena Ivanova
A 183 IQ means she's well aware her skirt is *that* short.

Taking cover is for suckers. We say that because if *Vanquish* is played in the manner customary for third-person shooters—duck and shoot, shoot and hide—it delivers a competent but unremarkable combat experience. Yes, there's plenty of armored combat robots facing off against heavily armed space marines, but it's merely an amalgamation of bits and pieces and scenarios we've seen in other shooters.

It's only when hero Sam Gideon accesses the enhanced combat capabilities of his Augmented Reaction Suit (ARS) that the gameplay enters overdrive. Activating the battle suit's boost capability had us stylishly maneuvering around enemies in a rocket-propelled slide, while avoiding attacks took just a flick of the Left-stick and an X button press to initiate of variety of evasive flips and cartwheels. If we came across a particularly challenging opponent or happened to fall under heavy fire, entering AR mode slowed the action down to allow pinpoint targeting of an enemy's highlighted weak points. But an overreliance on these capabilities causes the ARS to overheat, potentially leaving us perilously exposed and vulnerable. Dancing on the razor's edge of over- or under-reliance on the suit's powers is when *Vanquish's* battles truly come alive.



Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Sega
Dev PlatinumGames **Price** $59.99
ESRB Mature **It's like** Rambo meets *Robotech.*

And what battles they are. Facing off against standard 'bot troops is satisfying, but the confrontations enter the epic realm when the gargantuan bosses appear. There's a certain David vs. Goliath feel to the intense action—if David had downed a case of Red Bull before entering the fray. A mid-game assault on the 1,000-feet high Kreon weapons platform stands out in particular for the sheer number of enemies confronted and the massive scale of destruction.

But whereas *Vanquish's* battles distinguish it, it's the manner in which game progression occurrs that downgrades the experience. Too often, quick-time events or cutscenes are activated not by how well we fought, but rather by merely surviving until an arbitrary point. It's a contrivance that cheapens the experience and left us watching some climactic scenes rather than participating in them.

Another significant issue (but one the game's director, Shinji Mikami, readily stated during development) is the lack of multiplayer. It's a tribute to *Vanquish's* appealing characters, involving storyline, and exhilarating action that we don't bemoan its absence, but be forewarned that our playthrough took about 10 hours and there's little replay value beyond a handful of survival-type challenges. It's all over a bit too quickly, but the open-ended story virtually ensures a sequel—leaving us eager to don the ARS once again. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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Quantum Theory

Like a theoretical formula, but less fun

There's an interesting story at work in *Quantum Theory*. At its outset, the game appears to be a straightforward post-apocalyptic narrative about a grunting supercommando named Syd, who's fixated on destroying gigantic biomechanical structures called towers. Filled with monsters and lethal defenses, the towers have poisoned the landscape and pushed humanity to the brink of extinction while leaving it up to Syd and his ever-changing roster of allies to push back.

Or so it seems. As the game unfolds, we learn the towers are more complex than they appear—as are Syd and his eventual sidekick: a tough energy-sword-wielding girl named Filena. It's a pity then that so few of these cool revelations end up making any sort of impact on the plot, characters, or action. Instead they're shoved aside in favor of *Theory's* main concern: forcing players to slog through an endless stream of thuddingly rote firefights.

A cover-centric shooter in the vein of *Gears of War*, *Theory* boils down to straightforward shootouts, mainly against hordes of interchangeable gun-toting stormtrooper types. There are frequent appearances by big rocket-toting brutes and small skittering stabby things, but the strategy remains the same: unload a few shots in its face and it'll probably die. It's never particularly challenging, but unforgiving checkpoints and sudden cheap deaths meant we played for a lot longer than we wanted.

▲ When in doubt, huck the woman at the big ugly thing. Note: This does not work in real life.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Tecmo KOEI **Dev** Team Tachyon **Price** $59.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** *Darksiders* and *Gears of War* had a bland baby.

To be fair, the game tries to be interesting. Its levels occasionally reconfigure themselves on the fly, which left us scrambling for new cover or leaping to escape disappearing platforms. Fights against huge monsters are common although they take a while to reach, and *Theory* even features a few fun find-the-weak-point boss battles. *Theory* may also be the only shooter we've played wherein picking up and throwing our artificial intelligence partner is an approved combat tactic.

But while the parts are all there, the action still feels as soulless and bland as its stock-badass protagonist. There's no personality here—nothing to draw us in or push us forward—and no sense of fun. Adding eight-player deathmatches in lieu of co-op doesn't make up for it either. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

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DLC Roundup

Mafia II: Jimmy's Vendetta

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

Missions cloaked in a sliver of story are the order of the day as a bloodthirsty bloke named Jimmy strikes back at mobsters. This expansion offers 30 timed arcade-style challenges that range from chase sequences to assassinations for would be goodfellas looking for good fun.

Dragon Age: Origins Witch Hunt

Price $6.99 **ESRB** Mature

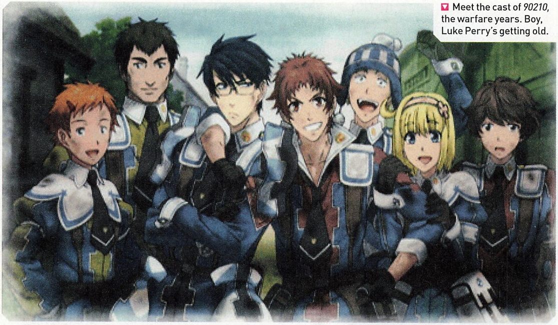
Anyone obsessed with Morrigan, the scantily clad sorceress from *Origins*, will likely find some measure of enjoyment in this short offering. But with only a handful of new environments and one major boss battle, there's not much here to recommend even for just seven bucks.

Download of the Month

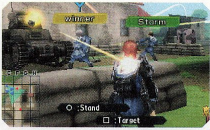
BioShock 2: Minerva's Den

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

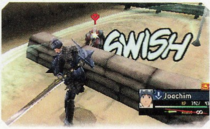
With three new campaign chapters involving the technological inner-workings of Rapture's supercomputer and the fate of the man who created it, *Minerva's Den* is filled with satisfying surprises. Count on a good four hours of gameplay with battles against the new uber-deadly Lancer Big Daddies amongst the DLC's highlights.

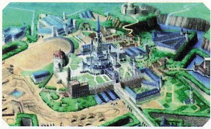


▼ Meet the cast of *90210*, the warfare years. Boy, Luke Perry's getting old.



▲ Fencers can use their swords to destroy tanks—just like in real life!





▲ The Lanseal Military Academy, formerly known as Hogwarts until they lost their lease.

Valkyria Chronicles II

A new standard in strategy—so long as it stops talking

There are problems in *Valkyria Chronicles II*, but most of them have to do with the parts we don't actually play. The first game revolved around a rag-tag army of draftees and volunteers who made up an entertaining mixed bag of a cast. The sequel features a bunch of teenage chumps from the misfit class at a military academy, which apparently gave Sega an excuse to swipe every single cardboard cliché from every Japanese cartoon featuring high-school kids. At best, the dialogue is only mildly excruciating, but we've eaten more interesting characters from a box of fun-shaped macaroni and cheese.

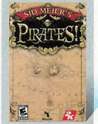
So that's a disappointment. With our hands on the controls, though, it's easy enough to forget.

The genius of the original *Chronicles* was how it made a console strategy game exciting. Moving and fighting in real time on a 3D battlefield put us right in the middle of something, instead of just scooting little pieces around a glorified chessboard. It didn't go so far toward the action end of things that we had to twitch instead of think and the sequel follows along in those footsteps. In fact, it's even more of an armchair general's game than its predecessor.

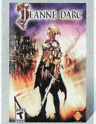
Info

Format PSP **Pub** Sega
Dev Sega **Price** $39.99
ESRB Teen **It's like** Joining an army of spunky anime teenagers.

Like This? Play these



Sid Meier's Pirates!
More action mixed with strategy and some involving almost-history.
VERDICT 8



Jeanne d'Arc
An exceptional SRPG, complete with stubby little soldier-men.
VERDICT 9

On the surface, *Chronicles II* has five classes of soldier, like the first game. Dig into the campaign though and every class now has a half-dozen specialist classes to go with it. Those unlock as characters pick up experience in combat (or course credit to be precise, since these kids are still in school). A scout can focus on long-range shooting and become a sniper or a lancer can trade in his anti-armor rockets in favor of a mortar launcher for bombing enemy foot soldiers. Class G at the Lanseal Military Academy includes nearly 30 cadets to develop and there's a ridiculous amount of depth to the options available for fitting them into specialized roles.

True, some of those roles strain credibility a touch. The new armored tech class, which specializes in melee combat, can eventually train up through the fencer specialty and smash tanks into shrapnel with a giant sword. That's one of the advantages to *Chronicle's* alternate world though—it can sacrifice realism in favor of fun.

The expanded class system builds on top of the way the original *Chronicles* made each character unique. All of them have their own "potentials," special skills and attributes that activate during battles, and some of these play off each other in ways that can be exploited. Say the storyline reveals two characters have fallen in love—in practical terms that might give them some useful bonus stats when they're fighting together. (Or it might work just the opposite way, since they're dangerously distracted.) The cast's personalities aren't very interesting during the narrative bits of the game, but they make a real contribution on the gameplay side. It's another layer of detail to tinker and toy with when building the perfect army.

If some stronger smarter writing finds its way into *Chronicles* mix, there's an all-time classic waiting to come out of this series. Let's keep our fingers crossed for the already announced *Valkyria Chronicles III*. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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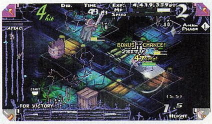
Knights in the Nightmare

Format **PSP** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Sting** Price **$29.99** ESRB **Teen**



Originally a Nintendo DS game, *Knights* is half shooter and half strategy-RPG. Yes, it made sense when we played it. No, we're not kidding.

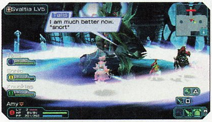
A tiny cursor called the Wisp controls our fantasy soldiers on a classic grid-based battlefield. But we have to dodge and weave while putting our tactics into play as the bad guys can shoot at the Wisp.

The twitchy action goes surprisingly well with the familiar strategy gameplay and it's easy enough to control with the PSP's analog nub. Our one big complaint: the load times. Still, the PSP campaign has an entire new hero's worth of story and a revised training mode helps with the learning curve. **DAVID F. SMITH**

PlayStation **8**

Phantasy Star Portable 2

Format **PSP** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**


Tails
I am much better now. *snort*

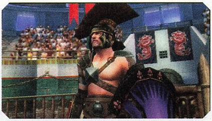
Yes, it's a trite expression, but...if you liked *Phantasy Star Universe,* you'll probably like*Phantasy Star Portable 2.* Then again, since Sega just took *PSU* out back and shot it, maybe that's a bad sign?

Almost any game about killing stuff and grabbing loot has a decent minimal threshold of addictive fun. Sadly, *Portable 2* doesn't aim too much higher. The series needs a proper teardown and rebuild—a faster, smoother combat system and completely new content to replace all the recycled monsters, items, and levels. Fighting other players online might be new to the portable series, but too much of the game just feels old. **DAVID F. SMITH**

PlayStation **5**

Gladiator Begins

Format **PSP** Pub **Aksys Games** Dev **GOSHOW** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Mature**

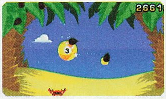


Roman gladiators might be the stuff of legends, but *Gladiator Begins* lacks the epic scale or compelling characters needed to overcome its repetitive random combatant bashing.

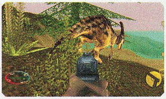
Combat drives the experience with our custom slave warrior offered the chance to buy his/her freedom through bloody battle. While there's some depth and customization—including the ability to acquire and equip other warriors' weapons and armor—the actual brawls are rarely interesting or notably different from each other. The game feels like one big grind and even the eventual showdowns with tigers and elephants offered few thrills during our feeble quest. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

PlayStation **5**

Minis Roundup

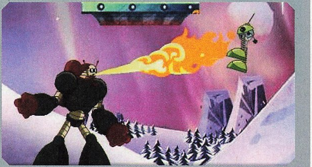


Helping a little red crab dodge a throng of falling coconuts while picking up gold and other goodies that drop from the sky is a stupidly simple concept, but **Coconut Dodge** is still an entertaining time waster. High speeds and increasingly crazy coconut drop patterns keep the strong twitchy action flowing. **BUY**

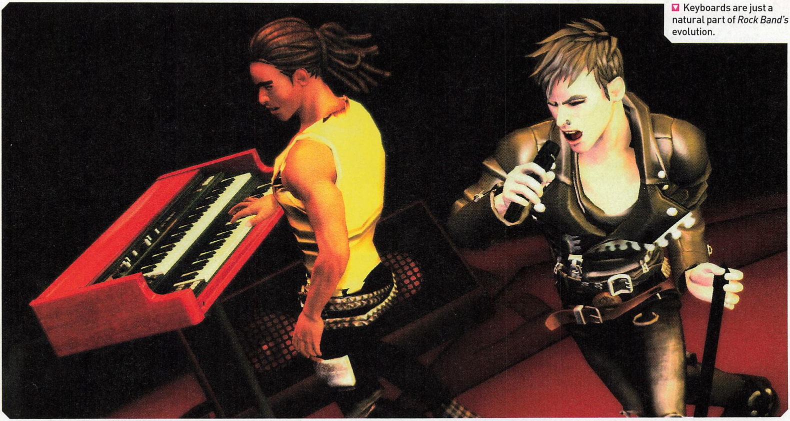


It turns out the dino-hunting profession isn't quite as exciting as **Carnivores: Dinosaur Hunter's** title suggests. Slowly trudging through swamps and forests in search of elusive dinos to pump hot lead into is simply boring. Points earned for kills can unlock new gear, but the effort isn't worth the payoff. **PASS**

Mini of the Month



Widgets Odyssey is a charming episodic puzzle adventure that kicks off with a bang. The story revolves around five robots working to stop the destruction of the universe and while the first installment is short, it's balanced out by amusing robotic antics, silly story moments, and a beautiful visual style. Exploring different planets to recover missing components is satisfying, if a little too simplistic at times. However, the $1.99 price tag is certainly right. **BUY**



Keyboards are just a natural part of *Rock Band's* evolution.

Rock Band 3

Rock 'n' roll will never die!

GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Electronic Arts/ MTV Games **Dev** Harmonix **Price** $59.99 (disc only) **ESRB** Teen **It's like** Learning a real instrument while playing.

Everything felt new again, the whole experience. Holding a crazy hunk of plastic encrusted with an overwhelming number of buttons, feeling the rush of nailing a our favorite guitar lick, indulging in a small taste of rock-'n'-roll stardom as the crowd began to sing along—all the elements that made us love music games in the first place were suddenly made fresh again in *Rock Band 3*.

Not only does the game retain the feel of an inclusive loving celebration of both music and gaming that made the previous games so endearing, it gives us an entirely new way to play that also redefines what videogames can accomplish. The secret to its successful reinvention of the genre? The Pro mode, which at its highest level gives players a 100 percent note-for-note recreation of the music.

This makes for a pretty serious challenge, one that absolutely cannot be conquered in a day (or even a week). As with learning to play a real instrument, mastering Pro mode requires serious patience and commitment. We were ready to Pete Townshend our guitar into a wall at several points. But as we honed our basic skills and began learning the songs, we felt we were genuinely accomplishing something. We practically exploded with fist-pumping excitement when we starting nailing song after song.

Guitar Picky

A word of warning, though: The trainers, though helpful, can also be overzealous. There's no room for sloppiness, especially since the guitar itself is sensitive and occasionally registered strings we didn't hit because we simply played too hard. The actual songs outside of the trainers seemed to be less punishing, however, and we did manage to adjust to the instrument's touchiness. Plus, the skills we earned were applicable to real world music making.

Five Tips How to get the most out of Rock Band 3

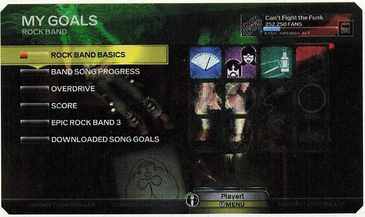
1 **In Control** The brand new Overshell gives complete control over individual player settings without interrupting play. Use it!

2 **Auto Tune** *Rock Band's* auto-calibration system syncs the TV with the PS3 for perfectly natural-feeling gameplay. Use that too!

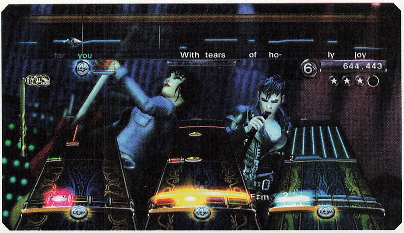
3 **Start a Band** Though the old instruments still work, the newer Pro gear can get pricey. Find some friends and divvy up the cost.

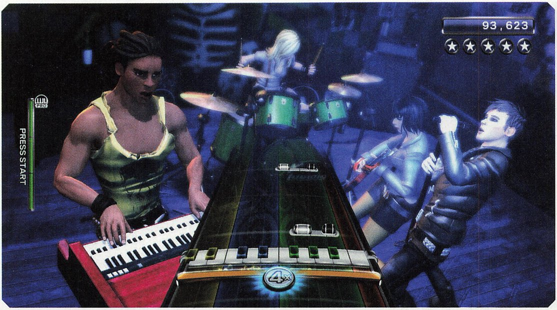
4 **All For One** Don't attempt to be a one-man band. Pick one instrument and stick with it to become a more accomplished player.

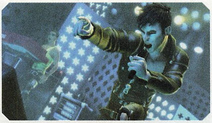
5 **Relax, Don't Do It** Practice makes perfect, but take breaks from music training for standard-gameplay fun too.



Every rock band has its own set of goals—most of which revolve around illegal substances, heavy decibels, and the chance to play "Freebird."



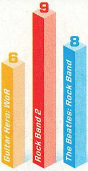




Goodnight, Springton! There will be no encores.

If this all sounds a bit intense, don't worry. Even on the very manageable medium and easy settings, Pro mode evokes the same euphoria *Guitar Hero* did when that game first came out: discovery, excitement, and frustration followed by reward. Pro is just a more technical alternative to the traditional five-button gameplay and should appeal to anyone who enjoys music games—even if they don't want to learn to play a real guitar.

And if Pro seems too intimidating, *Rock Band 3* also offers a brand-new instrument. Though we found we got the most out of the keyboard by playing in Pro mode, using it for the standard gameplay proved just as fun. Playing synth-heavy songs such as The Sounds' "Living In America" feels exactly right. Not only does playing the keyboard feel different enough to require a new set of skills, the note tracks have been custom tailored to the instrument. It just wouldn't feel the same on a guitar.



ScorePole

Rock Band remains the undisputed champion of plastic-guitar rhythm games. Sorry, *Guitar Hero*...

On the Road Again

The new Career mode here turns out to be only partially new. *Rock Band 2's* city-by-city tour for world domination has now been broken up into small discrete tours called Road Challenges, but the band-centric milestones and cutscenes (such as winning a van and choosing a name) remain intact. There's just enough latitude to let us fill in the blanks for ourselves—a "build the narrative" approach to storytelling that gives us a sense of ownership and, with it, a sense of progression and accomplishment.

The game also features hundreds of smaller goals that chart all kinds of stats. For some inexplicable reason, Road Challenges are rolled in with the rest of these goals, which meant we had to dig through menus to find them, but that's more of a problem with the presentation than the content itself. The goals were also a bit boring, but we barely noticed with so much other content to enjoy.

The soundtrack, on the other hand, really surprised us. We developed a deeper appreciation for the hits we already knew, but it was the songs we *didn't* know that actually got stuck in our heads. The curators of the set list seem to have an uncanny knack for selecting tracks that allow players to get the most out of the game. Oh, and don't forget there's nearly 2,000 additional tracks available as downloadable content.

Rock Band 3's greatest achievement may be that it's not just another *Rock Band* game; it's an ambitious step forward for the genre. If any game can combat waning interest and slumping sales, this is the one. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

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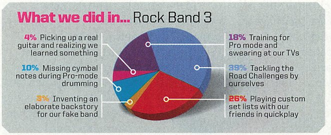
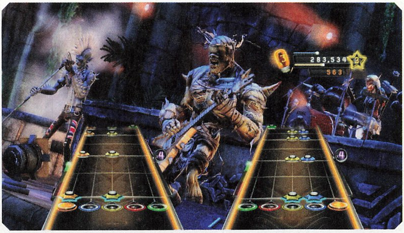
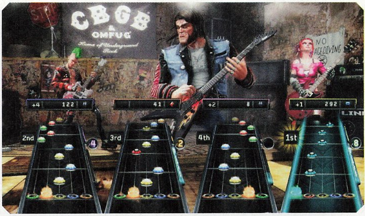
What we did in... Rock Band 3





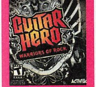


Fun Fact: According to the songmasters in AC/DC, rock 'n' roll isn't noise pollution. The band also posits rock 'n' roll, it will survive, yes it will, ha-ha.

Guitar Hero Warriors of Rock

Elvis leaves building. Lars Umlaut gets past security

Info



Format PS3
Pub Activision
Dev Neversoft
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like Listening to a broken record while dressed like Gene Simmons.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to *Guitar Hero's* Fat Elvis phase. Like a bloated aging rock star, *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* stumbles onto the stage without addressing the series' biggest issue: stagnation. After so many years of the same enjoyable but unaltered gameplay, we needed a change to the underlying formula to renew our interest. Instead, we got a ridiculous new costume.

The all-new quest mode is a perfect example. The short, empty cutscenes bookending each venue are merely a dressed-up way of framing the same old process of playing a preset list of songs and earning enough stars to move on. The only difference now is Lars Umlaut transforms into a warthog when we're done. Really, the whole idea of turning the career mode into a campy fantasy adventure is baffling and though the story has its goofy fun moments, it's mostly bland and pointless.

Same with the "powers" each character possesses—like Umlaut's 6x multiplier (as opposed to 4x) or Echo Tesla's star power bonus for each 10-note streak. Though a few offer a clever if superficial twist, they have no significant impact on the way we play the game because the strategy—as always—remains "miss as few notes as possible." Of course, the powers do allow us to earn dozens of stars per song, but this is far more confusing than rewarding since stars are an arbitrary metric. Ultimately, the powers are totally contrived and out of place in a rhythm game.

Much like Quest mode, *Warrior's* other major addition, Quickplay +, attempts to repackage old standards in a new format. In some ways it succeeds, including the cool ability to constantly share our exploits with our friends and build an online reputation. Unfortunately, the 13 challenges contained in each song are all ideas we've seen before: hit X number of chords or pull-offs, achieve a high score of X number of points, and so on. It's familiar to the point of boring now.

And then there's the song list, a head-scratching mix of re-recordings of classic songs, non-hits from big bands, and groups we've never ever heard of. Not only does it lack variety and depth but it very clearly caters to guitar players, which might make local multiplayer sessions awkward. We can't even imagine trying to sing some of these songs.

To the game's credit, the core gameplay still fundamentally works—quite well at times; even *Warrior's* lame attempt at cosplay couldn't change that. Unfortunately, it's too little too late to reverse the fortunes of a star in decline.

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SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

F1 2010

Formula 1™

XBOX 360
Games for Windows LIVE
DVD
PS3
F1 2010
Formula 1

"LOOKS AND RUNS BEAUTIFULLY... THE AMOUNT OF REAL-WORLD INFORMATION CONTAINED IN F1 2010 IS MIND-BLOWING."

- IGN.COM

"RIDICULOUS LEVELS OF CAR ADJUSTABILITY."

- PlayStation: The Official Magazine

"PRECISE CONTROLS, INTELLIGENT AI COMPETITORS AND SOME SERIOUSLY STELLAR VISUALS."

- GamesRadar US

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

F1 2010 AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 21ST **FORMULA1-GAME.COM**

Games for Windows LIVE XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network codemasters

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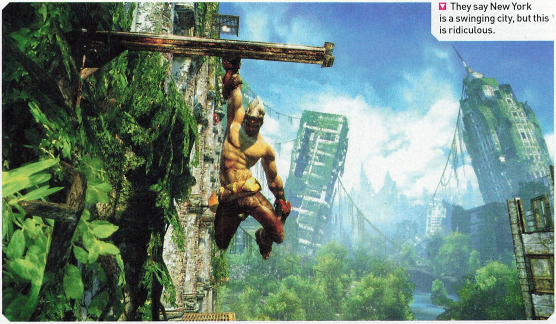

They say New York is a swinging city, but this is ridiculous.

For a dysfunctional duo, Monkey and Trip get along pretty darn well.

Enslaved Odyssey to the West

Getting there should be a lot more fun

We were rooting for this one. We really were. After all, *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West* seemed to have all the elements we love: strong, likable characters; an appealing mix of combat, clambering, and puzzle solving; and a visually arresting setting. Alas, it was not to be, as *West* is undone by both technical and creative issues—taking what could have been an exceptional experience and instead delivering a modestly satisfying but often frustrating game.

The biggest problem: a stuttery framerate combined with touchy controls and an awful camera. Forget the abundant killer mechs roaming this post-apocalyptic New York—our fiercest struggle was battling the headache-inducing camera that seemed in constant cahoots with the nauseating framerate. Add in context-sensitive controls that are rather insensitive to the context (we can't count how many times Monkey did a somersault instead of jumping off a ledge), plus combo-based combat that often sent us swinging our staff at everything but the enemies surrounding us, and well...the game could certainly use some tightening up.

For those curious about this retelling of the classic Chinese story *Journey to the West*, the struggle might be worth it. The setting alone merits a visit: 150 years in the future, New York has been devastated but enough time has passed to allow for a lush layer of green to reclaim this once-proud city. Grass grows between the cracks in the pavement, moss and vines crawl up the sides of wrecked skyscrapers, flowers bloom on ravaged rooftops—it's a magnificent sight and a refreshing departure from the dreary post-apocalypses we're familiar with.

Also refreshing: Monkey and Trip. When Trip—after escaping a slaver ship with Monkey clinging to the outside of the escape pod—explains to her reluctant travel partner she slipped a slave-control headband onto his noggin, she seems almost apologetic yet still resolute. Meanwhile, Monkey doesn't overreact to his subjugation, and the relationship soon enough evolves into a believable partnership. The duo even learns to leverage the unique benefits of their one-sided connection.

Indeed, it's *Enslaved's* story that pushed us ever onward, through the inevitable plot twist coming midway in and onto the final third of the game's 14 chapters (during which we meet the oddly charming Pigsy—one of our favorite characters this year). The only real place the story stumbles: the ending. Honestly, we're still scratching our heads over this one: It seems to come out of nowhere while taking the tale in a wholly different direction, and yet we can't help but have a reluctant fondness for it.

The game, though, stumbles throughout. The clambering is as straightforward as 2008's *Prince of Persia* but doesn't share that game's hypnotically rhythmic grace. The combat is at best serviceable, as are the puzzles. And the technical issues often rob *West* of any charm it was developing as we played it. Yet strong characters (the setting itself being one of them) can sometimes overcome the greatest of challenges—a point proven by our 15 hours spent sharing a journey with the eminently likeable Monkey and Trip. **GARY STEINMAN**

Cast List

THE BRAINS

Trip
That body is just window-dressing for her sensational mind

THE BRAWN

Monkey
A brute? Perhaps, but he's also got that proverbial golden heart

THE BEAUTY

NYC
So this is what happens when nature reclaims the world. Nice!

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Ninja Theory **Price** $59.99 **ERRB** Teen **It's like** Having a first-class plane ride ruined by turbulence.

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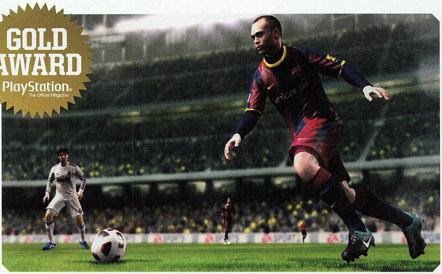
GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine



FIFA Soccer 11

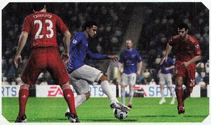
Football without the foam fingers and big painted bellies

Info

Format PS3
Pub EA Sports
Dev EA Sports
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like A new pair of shoes, size 11.

Apart from getting a new pair of boots, one of our favorite things in the world is a new version of *FIFA*. This is number 11. The game looks and feels just that much more authentic without feeling like we're sitting through 90 minutes of Stoke City versus Wigan.

Defending tactics are stronger and more natural. There's no more watching a defender locked into a chase sequence we can't switch out of—the impending cross and goal being more or less a frustrating forgone conclusion in previous years.



There's also more realistic jostling for the ball. Careful though, the ref is a bit whistle-happy.

One complaint that we've had in the past is players don't regularly make the intuitive attack runs that they should and would make in real life. Unfortunately, players still often broke off their runs after passing the ball, leaving us stranded.

Career mode was a surprisingly fun bonus. Just like a real pro, we ran and ran and ran and then got one touch of the ball. But after a few completed passes a chance came our way and voila—the rookie has a future. Brilliant. **KEN BOUSQUET**

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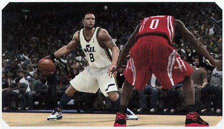
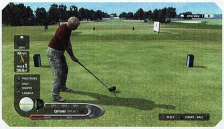


NBA 2K11

Format **PS3** Pub **2K Sports** Dev **Visual Concepts/ Kush** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Everyone**

NBA 2K11's inclusion of Michael Jordan's greatest career moments is a touch of, er, magic. And the developers don't mail in the historical accuracy; jaws will drop the first time Jordan tugs on his shorts or Magic Johnson hits a set-shot jumper. *2K11* supplements its accuracy with the technical proficiency and top-tier visual flair we've come to expect from the series. The controls for the game haven't changed and while the passing game is tricky these days (it's too easy to turn the ball over), we appreciate the realism. It still doesn't feel quite like the real thing, but it's very close. **GEORGE JONES**

PlayStation **8**



John Daly's ProStroke Golf

Format **PS3** Pub **O-Games** Dev **Gusto Games** Price **$49.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Our arms are aching. This isn't a bad thing; in fact it's a testament to the way that *ProStroke Golf* delivers its golf. Controlled via PlayStation Move, wrist position, stance, and bicep-ripping swing power all figure into recreating the real-life game. The Move controls work well, but the drab presentation and an enthusiast-centric seriousness lands the play experience in a bunker. Still, if Gusto Games can build on their solid engine, then Tiger might have another reason to go into hiding. **NATHAN IRVINE**

PlayStation **7**

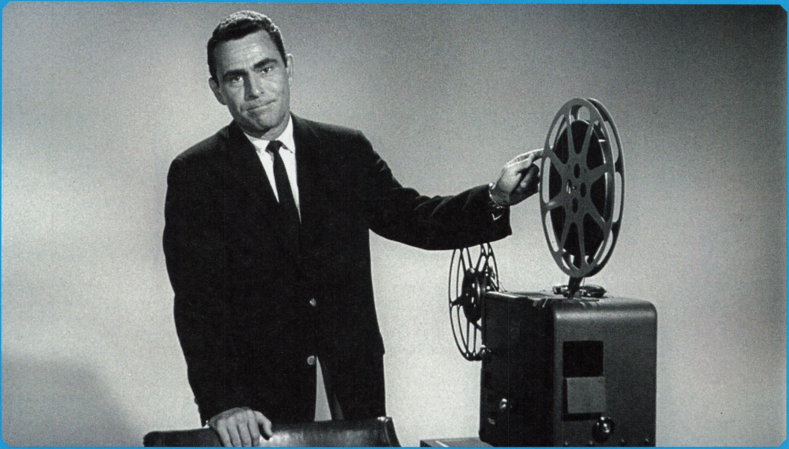
F1 2010

Format **PS3** Pub **Warner Bros.** Dev **Codemasters Birmingham** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Everyone**

F1 2010 shines at translating the violence and velocity of a 200-mph racing car to the screen: When things are going right it feels like we're at the helm of a laser-guided Tomahawk missile. When they're going wrong, it's like trying to stay on top of a bucking bronco.

Formula One fans will appreciate the game's zealous authenticity, but the "live the driver's lifestyle" elements will draw in some curious casual race fans as well. *F1 2010* is gorgeous, frighteningly fast, and offers aggressive racing in a packed field. For fans and non-fans alike, that's a tough offer to pass up. **MIKE CHANNELL**

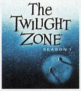
PlayStation **8**



The Twilight Zone Season One

Another dimension of sound, sight, and mind

Info



Price $49.95
Creator Rod Serling
Starring Rod Serling, various guests
Rated Not Rated
Extras Assorted commentaries, interviews, radio dramas, musical scores, and unaired versions of the pilot episode and the unaired pitch episode.

The odds are good readers of this magazine are either in full geekdom or dangerously close to coming out of the techno-closet. But there was a time long before Trekkies, *Star Wars* disciples, and videogamers when TV was just starting to come around and our geek forefathers were actively discovering the most incredible medium humanity had ever witnessed to spread their craft. Rod Serling was chief among these pioneers. At its start, television was viewed as an alien thing best looked at as an accompaniment to radio and theater. To that end, famous novelists, playwrights, and literary geniuses suddenly found the entire world had, indeed, become their stage.

The relevance of this amalgam of great storytellers, actors, and directors can hardly be better found than in *The Twilight Zone.* Image Entertainment has brought fans such a superb blu-ray package of the first season (1959–1960) that we can only hope it's a harbinger of things to come. Aside from the pristine HD picture and clear (though still mono) audio, the extras are just as noteworthy as the 36 short-story episodes.

Chief among the extras is the "Time Element," a sort of test pilot episode from a 1958 anthology series hosted by Desi Arnaz. Aside from being a truly great find for fans, the picture quality of the hour-long show is just as stunning as the rest of the on-disc episodes. Beyond that, there's an insane amount of commentaries, interviews, radio dramas, isolated musical scores, and more.

The only downside is that a few items from the 2004 Definitive Edition DVD set are missing: a Drew Carey parody on *Time Enough at Last,* a Serling-hosted episode of *Liar's Club,* a blooper, and various photographs.

Our enthusiasm for this package might seem strange for those not familiar with the groundbreaking show, but few other series in the history of TV have so profoundly affected sci-fi, horror, and fantastical storytelling. Each episode tells a completely unrelated tale, the only connection being that something beyond normal human perception is going to occur. Some stories were humorous, many others were tragic, and all were, at minimum, fascinating and carefully constructed works of writing and acting. A 50-year-old show isn't likely to be on everyone's radar, but for the geeks among us—those who love their label and the mediums associated with it—*Zone* should be of profound interest. The show has never looked better and this collection is an easy recommendation.

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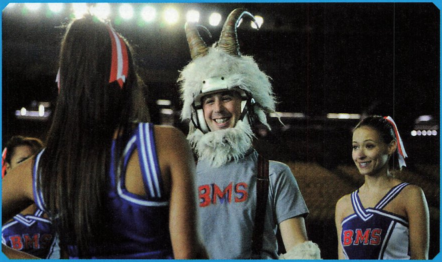
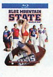
JASON D'APRILE



Blue Mountain State

Majoring in inappropriate and tasteless



Info

Price $29.98 **Creators** Eric Falconer, Chris Romano **Starring** Alan Ritchson, Darin Brooks **Rated** Not Rated **Extras** Behind the scenes on casting, cheerleaders, and outtakes.

And now for something completely different... Apparently Spike TV airs more than just sweaty guys beating each other up. It also has sweaty guys doing inappropriate things to each other in ways that, as it turns out, are so shockingly hilarious it's a miracle *Blue Mountain State* made it past the network censors. *State* is a college football-themed sitcom with the low, low standards of the bawdiest R-rated comedies out there.

As it turns out, this is also one of the craziest, most hilarious, and outright crude shows in all the land. With episodes covering such ground as losing a promise ring in the cavernous anatomy of a stripper, the wonders of self-pleasuring devices, and blackmailing a school mascot in the worst way imaginable, the show isn't for the faint or easily offended. But who likes those losers anyway?

Whoever the creators of this kaleidoscope of wrongness are, we salute them for they have brought forth half-hour vignettes of everything guys would rather be laughing at, doing (or at least thinking about doing), or watching with surprisingly little compromise. There's really no "unrated" footage added here to amp up the purchasing pleasure (so there's a sad lack of full-frontal nudity and high-end profanity). On the other hand, there's a whole episode about a pocket-sized male masturbation device and no shortage of almost-naked coed hotties.

Does *State* have any socially redeeming qualities? Hell no, and that's one reason it's so appealing. The show is so distinctively raunchy and over the top it makes standard primetime shows such as *Two and a Half Men* look positively angelic.

On the downside, the extras aren't particularly noteworthy: aside from some outtakes, they're really just promotional videos for the show. But at $30, *State* is perfect for fans of this sort of thing—it costs the same as a movie, but contains 286 minutes of hilarity instead of just 90. Yes, we're sure we'll be punished for our depravity, but we're also sure we'll be laughing all the while after watching the over-the-top antics that are routinely played out in *State*. JD

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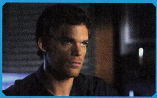
Blu-ray Round-Up

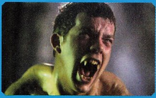
The Losers

The film adaptation of Vertigo comics' phenomenal series, *The Losers*, remains close to the source material despite some obvious changes. Entirely stripping the political Middle Eastern terrorist themes costs the PG-13 film some bite, but it's made up for in other ways: characters who were on the periphery in the comic are more fleshed out and the humor and action are terrific. 7



Dexter The Fourth Season

Those who haven't seen *Dexter* should be ashamed. Showtime's brilliant mix of police procedure, domestic drama, comedy, and murder simply gets better each season. Now that Dexter is a devoted husband and new father, the dynamics of the show have changed and improved further. 9



Being Human Season Two

Being Human lazily continues to avoid any semblance of rules about its vampires, werewolves, and ghosts with side stories that appear and disappear regularly and without explanation. And yet, the involving and terrifically fun show could be considered on par with HBO's *True Blood*. 7

Stargate Universe Season 1.5

Though it's dogged by lazy scripting and bickering characters, *Stargate Universe* continues to gain ground. The blu-ray has top-notch production values and should satisfy fans hungry for season two. 7

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Zotac Zbox

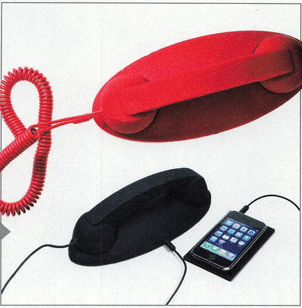
This energy-efficient mini PC includes Intel's new 1.8GHz Atom D525 CPU, 2GB of memory, NVIDIA's next-gen Ion graphics processor, USB, HDMI, a 6-in-1 card reader, optical audio, and a slot-loading Blu-ray drive.

$240
zotac.com

Native Union Moshi Moshi Retro Handset

The stylish Moshi Moshi connects to an iPhone or any other headphone-jack equipped phone and it's good to go. Or stay, as it were.

$300
nativeunion.com



Nyko Raven

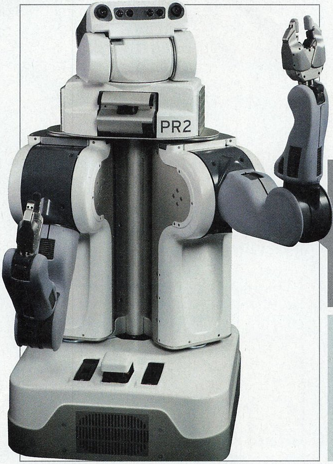
Covered in Nyko's Soft Feel Surface—a soft, rubbery coating—the Raven controller has angled triggers, perfect for first-person shooters and racing games. It's available with 360-style offset analog sticks or with the standard DualShock configuration.

$40
nyko.com

Shure SE535 Sound-Isolating Earphones

Shure's triple-driver buds produce a dynamic range that's more impressive than anything else we can stick in our ears. The buds are super comfortable too.

$500
shure.com



Willow Garage PR2

Willow Garage sells a robot with gobs of computing power, two highly articulated pincer arms, and high-end vision systems. These programmable bots can be made to do laundry, set the table, and become your bestest friend.

$400,000
willowgarage.com

Boxee Box

The Internet television revolution finally hits the living room and the Boxee Box is on the front line. An intuitive interface (with remote control), insides fast enough to stream true HD video, and the ability to play nearly any format.

$230
boxee.tv

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The Official Magazine

"you're in the real world now and the lunatics have taken over the asylum."

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- Interviews with the senior executives and game designers shaping the future of PlayStation
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Teabagging not explained, Boba Fett's fate, and entirely too much stickiness for one magazine

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ALL NEW LOOK!
CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS
MULTIPLAYER PLAYTEST
+ MOVE LAUNCH GUIDE
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
Twisted Metal
Sweet Tooth returns with a vengeance
BIOSHOCK: INFINITE
New details revealed
GRAN TURISMO 5
GOD OF WAR PSP

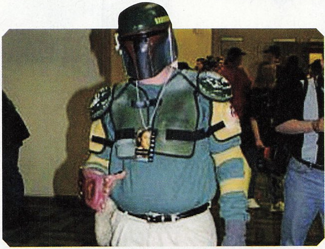
Sweet Tooth wants you to visit his ice cream truck for yummy treats. We say: Don't trust clowns.

Boba Blunder!

Did I really read in your magazine that Boba Fett died in the belly of the Sarlacc? Did you actually print that? Did you really assign the task of writing the *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II* preview (Issue #37) to someone with so little knowledge of the canon he thinks Fett died? It doesn't take exhaustive knowledge of the *Star Wars* canon to know that Fett escaped from the Sarlacc and factors more or less into many of the post-Jedi stories. While the preview was great as a whole and I am sufficiently titillated, this lack of vetting by the writer and editorial staff has left me with a lower opinion of your geekdom. Step it up and may the Force be with you.

MAX FERGUSON PARTS UNKNOWN

Boba Fett shot a rope at a Jedi, was beaten by a blind guy with a stick, and died screaming and flailing his arms as he fell into the pit. Yes, he was brought back in the extended universe novels and comics, but only because George Lucas needed to add a new wing to his third solid-gold house. PTOM would rather savor Fett's comical death than celebrate his lame resurrection.



▲ Boba Fett went on to have many fine adventures, many of them involving deep-dish pizzas.

Ode to Lettertron

I finally decided to write to you guys, just to tell you that there are two things I love to read in every issue of your awesome magazine. 1) The little description of the six team members, which are usually hilarious, and 2) your crazy replies to other people's letters to you. In the October issue (Issue #37) some guy was bitching about the debate over Rockstar going "too far." The reply: "But the Greg Orlando game has lasers, sassy robots, and cars that drive you! Also, if players do really well, their hero gets a new hat." I laughed out loud. That is, yes, I "LOL-ed."

PATRICK WAREZAK RAINY VANCOUVER

We have to give credit where credit is due, Patrick: The staff biographies and letter replies are written by BioTron 6635 and LetterTron 8820, respectively. Although they may look like cardboard boxes with pinwheels stuck in them, they are actually clever machines designed not to kill us in our sleep and then mock the corpses, but rather to make with the funny replies and clever quips. Also, the Greg Orlando game now

Letter of the Month

HEINZ 57
HEINZ
AWESOME SAUCE

When I open up my mailbox I actually do a little shimmy when I see PTOM sitting there. This month, all went as planned until I read your *Dead Space 2* vs. *Dead Rising 2* article in October's issue (Issue #37). That's where I found several pages stuck together. Using the thinking man's logic of "sticky pages in magazines are never, ever a good thing," that killed it for me and I didn't get to finish the article. Please tell me—I just need to hear it—that an extra slathering of glossy sheen was used or the ink was still wet when the magazine was printed. Until then, I'm stuck at the *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II* article.

MARK A. SAWYER YAKIMA, WA

Awesome sauce, and we're sticking to that story.

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

has a bonus stage in which the protagonist, Greg Orlando, gets to punch AtomicSuperHitler in the stomach for three hours.

The Stars Predict...

I'm having a tough time deciding what to get for my birthday. I want to pre-order whatever I'm getting, but I'm worried about making the wrong choice and not being able to return it. And that got me thinking, why don't you guys predict how the games will turn out. All you have to do is put a star-based prediction in the preview, and then include a summary of how off (or on) you were in the review! I have faith that you guys can make the right predictions (or not).

YOSEF TENNENBAUM LOS ANGELES, CA

...Someone Will Complain

Why don't you guys review not just games but demos and betas too? I mean this summer has been so boring with gaming. Are you guys too lazy to want to write and review any more games than you have to?

JOHN LOONEY PARTS UNKNOWN

These are intriguing ideas Yosef and John, but we're wary of predicting scores for previews and reviewing demos/betas. The problem here is that with demos and previews, we're often seeing only a small chunk of an unfinished game, sometimes without any context. It would be unfair to everyone to predict a score or issue a grade based on something that's neither a complete whole nor likely finished.

Having a Tea Party

In the Sept 2010 issue (Issue #36) in the "Game On, Virgin" article it states, "Jerks and teabaggers beware: Virgingaming.com tracks bad behavior." I was surprised to see a reference to teabaggers. I read the magazine for its information on videogames, not to get its political view. If I wanted to read about politics, I would subscribe to *Time* or *Newsweek*. I know that there are plenty of games out there with political undertones, but this had nothing to do with a game.

MICHAEL INSKEEP MARYSVILLE, OH

Michael, teabagging is...ah...something Manimal would never do, not even to his worst enemy.

Ask ROGER

Q After a hard day of work, it's always nice to see my PS3 has a snooze buddy. This actually happens quite often. This PS3 has been a gathering spot in my house for years, and it's not uncommon to find the kids and me here on the weekends with the cat watching in fascination. We are just wondering: When will Sony realize this market share and invent a feline interface? Until then, our cat will just use it as a pillow while she dreams of Gatling gun backpacks, infrared goggles, and the first installment of Robomouser.

PATRICK MARTIN GREENVILLE, SC

A Patrick, waiting for someone to solve cat problems isn't what made this country great, so why wait for Sony to do it? Attach some feathers and a bell to the end of a PlayStation Move wand and you're all set!

Let Us Go and Make Our Visit

I am married to a man that is having a major affair with his computer. Well, its his 30th birthday this year and seeing as he loves gaming so much I wanted to try and organize a visit to the makers of *Call of Duty* in California. Whether this is possible or not is my first question to you, and should I email people at Activision/Infinity Ward or Respawn? It's all very confusing! I would be eternally grateful if you could possibly point me in the right direction.

LEANNE PINDAR PARTS UNKNOWN

That's a really thoughtful idea, Leanne, and we certainly applaud your efforts to give your husband a special birthday. The problem is, most game companies (developers and publishers) don't offer tours for the general public. There's not much to see, unless, of course, you're thrilled by the site of cubicles, people hunched over computers, and maybe a bathroom with one of those newfangled air-blowing hand dryers. The interesting stuff is usually closely guarded by NERF-gun-wielding interns. Also consider this: Game company offices are places where people need to work—something that's hard to do when the hourly tour rolls through.

Mea Culpa!

PTOM mistakenly ran screenshots of *The Sims: Late Night* for PC instead of PS3-specific *The Sims 3* shots last issue (Issue #38). All apologies.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

STAR ISLAND
CARL HIAASEN

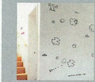
Star Island

"This novel about demented recording stars, body doubles, the former governor of Florida, weed-whacker wielding bodyguards, and sweaty paparazzi makes for some damn fine reading. The summer may be on the wane, but not my love for goofy prose."

GREG ORLANDO

Laura Stevenson and The Cans

"You have to check out this band's album *A Record*. It's packed with sweet subtle melodies that just stick in your head, and Laura Stevenson's voice is so easy to fall in love with." **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**



Atari Wall Decals

"I just moved into a new Fortress of Solitude, so I've got home decorating on the brain. What better decoration for my secret fortified game cave than these *Asteroids*, *Centipede*, or *Pong* wall decals available from thinkgeek.com?"

ROGER BURCHILL

Rubicon

"AMC's slow-moving spy series still has me confused, but the stellar acting and the remarkable feat of making intelligence analysts sexy is enough to have me on tenterhooks for season two."

GARY STEINMAN

PS3 Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games

UNCHARTED 2
AMONG THIEVES
NAUGHTY DOG

1

Action Adventure

Uncharted 2

Among Thieves

There's no way around it, Nathan Drake is without a doubt the PS3's biggest star and *Uncharted 2* is his most impressive adventure yet. Make no excuses: Get out there and buy it.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

GOD OF WAR III

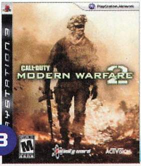
2

Action Adventure

God of War III

Huge beautiful battlegrounds. Brutally gory fights with magnificent climaxes. We expected the world from the finale of Kratos' trilogy and we got it. A must-have for anyone with even the slightest amount of bloodlust.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Santa Monica Studio**



3

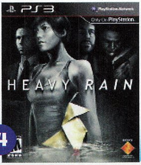
First-Person Shooter

Call of Duty

Modern Warfare 2

Ever since the first *Modern Warfare*, the *Call of Duty* franchise has been the preeminent multiplayer experience. The sequel only improves on the formula. Find out what the big deal is!

10 Pub **Activision**
Dev **Infinity Ward**



4

Adventure

Heavy Rain

Innovative, intriguing, and immersive, Quantic Dream brought us one of the most original titles in years. The mystery of the Origami Killer will keep everyone guessing until it's solved or the heroes die in the process.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Quantic Dream**

ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS
RED DEAD REDEMPTION

5

Open-World Shooter

Red Dead Redemption

Continuing with its record of amazing titles, Rockstar's latest open-world game combines a drop-dead gorgeous Old West with a mesmerizing story and fabulous characters.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar SD/North**

BATMAN
ARKHAM ASYLUM

6

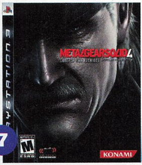
Action Adventure

Batman

Arkham Asylum

Finally, the Caped Crusader gets the current-gen game he deserves. Use a plethora of bat-gadgets and bat-moves to take back the Joker-controlled Arkham Asylum and love every second of it.

10 Pub **Eidos/Warner Bros.**
Dev **Rocksteady**



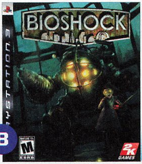
7

Stealth

Metal Gear Solid 4

Hideo Kojima's masterpiece might be criticized for its huge amounts of lengthy cutscenes and convoluted storyline, but that shouldn't stop anyone from experiencing one of the most important games on any platform today.

10 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**



8

First-Person Shooter

BioShock

One of the most beautifully designed shooters of all time with an amazing story to boot! Due to the freshness and originality of the first romp through Rapture, we recommend the original over the still magnificent sequel.

10 Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Irrational Games**

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV
CAPCOM

9

Fighter

Super Street Fighter IV

An update to the best fighting game from the most well-respected series in gaming history makes for a can't-miss title. Kicking heads and nostalgia combine to form one perfect package.

10 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**

BURNOUT
Paradise

10

Racing

Burnout Paradise

Fun racing is something that never gets old. Speeding around Paradise City, crashing cars, and enjoying the generous stream of DLC and fan service is great preparation for Criterion's forthcoming *NFS: Hot Pursuit*.

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Criterion Games**

GET READY FOR...

CATACLYSM

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

MAGAZINE ISSUE #3

Volume 01
Volume 01 · Issue 02
Issue 03
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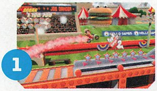
PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without

BEST FULL GAMES



1

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting dangerous has never been this awesome.

9

Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

2

Futuristic Racing

WipEout HD

As with any good remix, *WipEout HD* cannibalizes the best aspects of the high-speed, high-octane, high-risk-and-reward futuristic racing series in order to create one hell of a wild high-def ride.

9

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE Liverpool**

3

Multiplayer RTS

Fat Princess

Cake-fueled multiplayer mayhem is where this deceptively cute but brutal battler carries its weight. Force-feeding sweets to immobilize an enemy's princess may not be PC, but it's super fun.

8

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Titan Studios**

4

Zen Exploration

Flower

Artsy or not, this gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest AAA offerings.

9

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best of the bunch (though we still adore *Monsters*). Saving trapped mining colonists with a puzzle-solving environmental ship is a creative and challenging affair.

9

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

BEST DEMOS

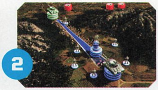
1

Platform Brawler

Shank

What could possibly be more entertaining than dissecting baddies with a chainsaw and shoving live grenades in their mouths and watching their heads explode in gory delight? Nothing. This demo is worth every second of download.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Klei Entertainment**



2

Real-Time Strategy

R.U.S.E

R.U.S.E. may be a breakthrough for RTSs on PS3. Get a sweet taste of military fakery in this Italian campaign mission that provides ample opportunity to throw down some of the game's notorious tricks and ruses.

Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Eugen Systems**

3

Third-Person Shooter

Vanquish

Go head to head against giant killer robots in this pulse-pounding action-filled third-person-perspective demo. With scores of Russian droids to obliterate and some serious boss battle action, *Vanquish* is one wild ride.

Pub **Sega**
Dev **Platinum Games**

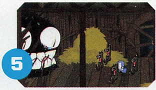
4

Third-Person Shooter

Quantum Theory

This cover-centric shooter offers *Gears of War*-style action. Plugging hot lead into mutant soldiers in this intense demo offers some quick thrills—as does working with the saucy female comrade to slaughter baddies.

Pub **Tecmo KOEI**
Dev **Team Tachyon**



5

Sidescrolling Brawler

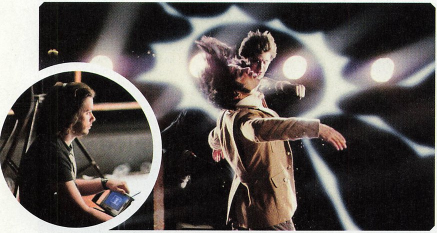
Castle Crashers

Aw, it's so cute...and so ruthless. Decapitating adorably cartoonish invaders in the first few demo stages of this long-awaited PSN indie hit gets the blood flowing and whets the palate for some sick multiplayer mayhem.

Pub **The Behemoth**
Dev **The Behemoth**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're watching on our PS3 this month



Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

ETA **November 9** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Action/Comedy** Studio **Big Talk Films/Universal Pictures**

At PTOM we're all about love...and fighting...and fighting for love. So is it any wonder that Scott Pilgrim is our hero? This month, we chat with the film's director Edgar Wright.

Book 6's ending hadn't been written when filming began. Why did you end the film as you did?
Some elements of the film that aren't in the comic books relate to material Bryan [series creator Bryan Lee O'Malley] was toying with that he didn't ultimately pursue—like the idea of the Katayanagi Twins being a musical act. During production, Bryan came up with the ending of the books and the three of us wrote a new resolution that we felt better tied up the relationships.

Who's your favorite character?
I guess I relate to Scott the most. I've certainly had my Ramona's in the past, girls I've declared undying love for without knowing a single thing about them. I also empathize with him as a daydreamer and a fantasist. He's a kid that lives in a bubble who has to grow up.

Where did the idea for the film's unique visual flair come from?
If anything this is the film that Scott Pilgrim has projected in his head. When your hero is a daydreamer it makes sense to set the film in his pop culture-addled brain. Some have asked me if I ever thought about toning the visuals down, but I'm not sure there is a "straight" version of this story.

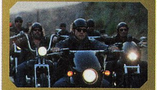
Which band in *Scott Pilgrim* is your favorite and why?
I have to go with Sex Bob-Omb. I never ever tire of hearing the opening credit music. It gets me fired up. It's so raw and noisy.

Was the movie's classic videogame sound effects purely homage or do you have a games background?
As a Brit in my thirties, I grew up during the dawn of home computers. I also had a big Sega/Sonic phase and was later obsessed with the first PlayStation titles. I don't have a console at the moment as I'm scared of how addicted I'd get. I am ashamed I haven't really played Ubisoft's amazing Scott Pilgrim game yet. Maybe you guys can hook me up with a console.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

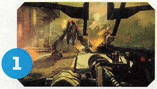
Robin Hood
Killers
Prince of Persia
MacGruber (Unrated)
Kick-Ass



TV Shows

Sons of Anarchy: Season 3
Jersey Shore: Season Miami
Naruto Uncut: Season 1 Vol. 4
It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia: Season 6
Mad Men: Season 4

BEST FREE STUFF



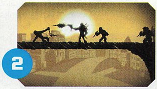
1

First-Person Shooter

Killzone 3 MP Trailer

This action-packed teaser set along the body-strewn Corinth Highway is front loaded with neck stabbing, robot mech piloting, and a bevy of new weaponry. Now imagine how awesome it'll be in 3D...

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Guerrilla Games**



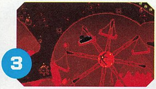
2

Platform Brawler

Shank Wallpaper 2

Nothing gets us feeling all romantic like brutal platforming. What better way to set the mood than to enjoy a beautiful desert sunset with a foreground silhouette of machinegun fire and death?

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Klei Entertainment**



3

Puzzle Adventure

TerRover Theme

This evil, evil game had us cursing, but *TerRover's* hand-drawn doodads and adorable roving robot pals make a charming addition to the PS3's desktop. This theme is loaded with personality.

Pub **Creat Studios**
Dev **Creat Studios**

4

Role-Playing Game

Dragon Age II Destiny Trailer

Dragon Age II has it all: fire, demons, gut slicing, sweet magic explosions, and so much more. We simply can't wait to jump into the RPG action after watching this fantastic teaser trailer.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

15
PlayStation

5

Super System

15th Anniversary Theme

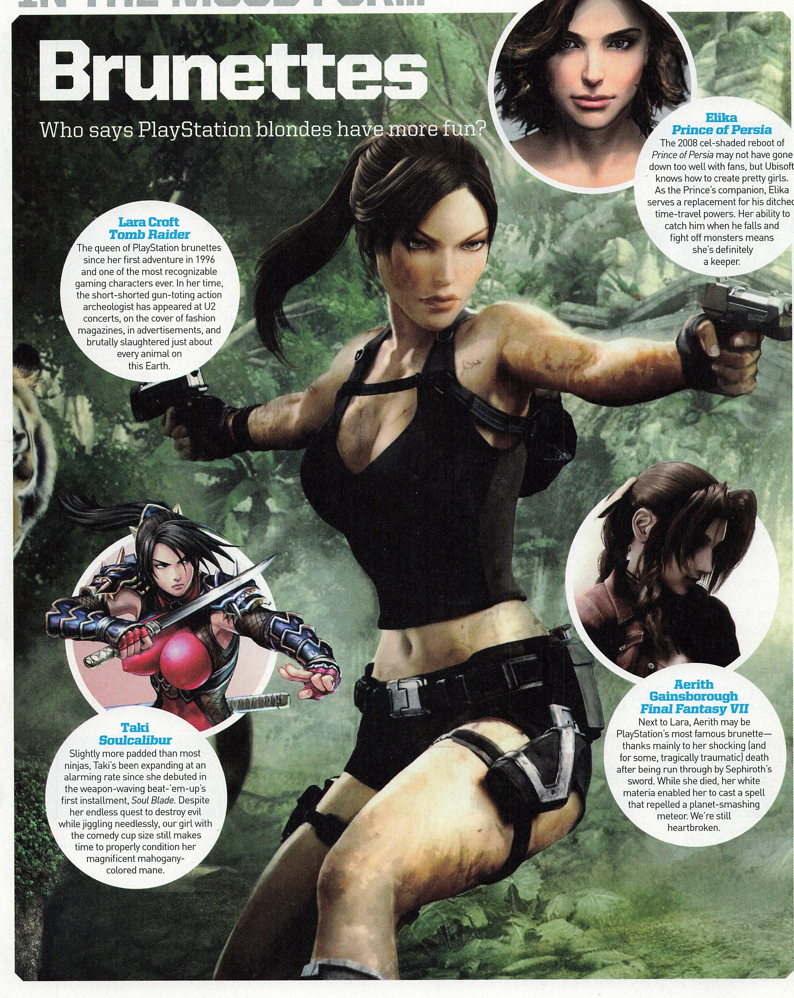
The original PlayStation was officially launched in North America on Sept. 9, 1995. Happiness has ensued ever since. Celebrate the last 15 years of gaming awesomeness with this anniversary theme.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCEA**

IN THE MOOD FOR...

Brunettes

Who says PlayStation blondes have more fun?



Elika
Prince of Persia

The 2008 cel-shaded reboot of *Prince of Persia* may not have gone down too well with fans, but Ubisoft knows how to create pretty girls. As the Prince's companion, Elika serves a replacement for his ditched time-travel powers. Her ability to catch him when he falls and fight off monsters means she's definitely a keeper.

Lara Croft
Tomb Raider

The queen of PlayStation brunettes since her first adventure in 1996 and one of the most recognizable gaming characters ever. In her time, the short-shorted gun-toting action archeologist has appeared at U2 concerts, on the cover of fashion magazines, in advertisements, and brutally slaughtered just about every animal on this Earth.

Taki
Soulcalibur

Slightly more padded than most ninjas, Taki's been expanding at an alarming rate since she debuted in the weapon-waving beat-'em-up's first installment, *Soul Blade.* Despite her endless quest to destroy evil while jiggling needlessly, our girl with the comedy cup size still makes time to properly condition her magnificent mahogany-colored mane.

Aerith Gainsborough
Final Fantasy VII

Next to Lara, Aerith may be PlayStation's most famous brunette—thanks mainly to her shocking (and for some, tragically traumatic) death after being run through by Sephiroth's sword. While she died, her white materia enabled her to cast a spell that repelled a planet-smashing meteor. We're still heartbroken.

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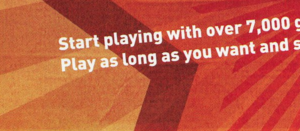
PS3
STAR WARS
THE FORCE UNLEASHED II
RP
PS3
GRAN TURISMO 5
E
3D
PS3
Fallout
NEW VEGAS
M
Bethesda

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THE NEXT LEGEND IS YOU™

"...it's looking like one hell of an MMO."
(Best of E3 2010, MMO Game of Show)
– Gamespy

"...the game not only looks Jim Lee-style great but also functions Kratos-style smooth."
– Gamepro

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RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

PlayStation®3

PlayStation®Network

PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE

WB GAMES

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